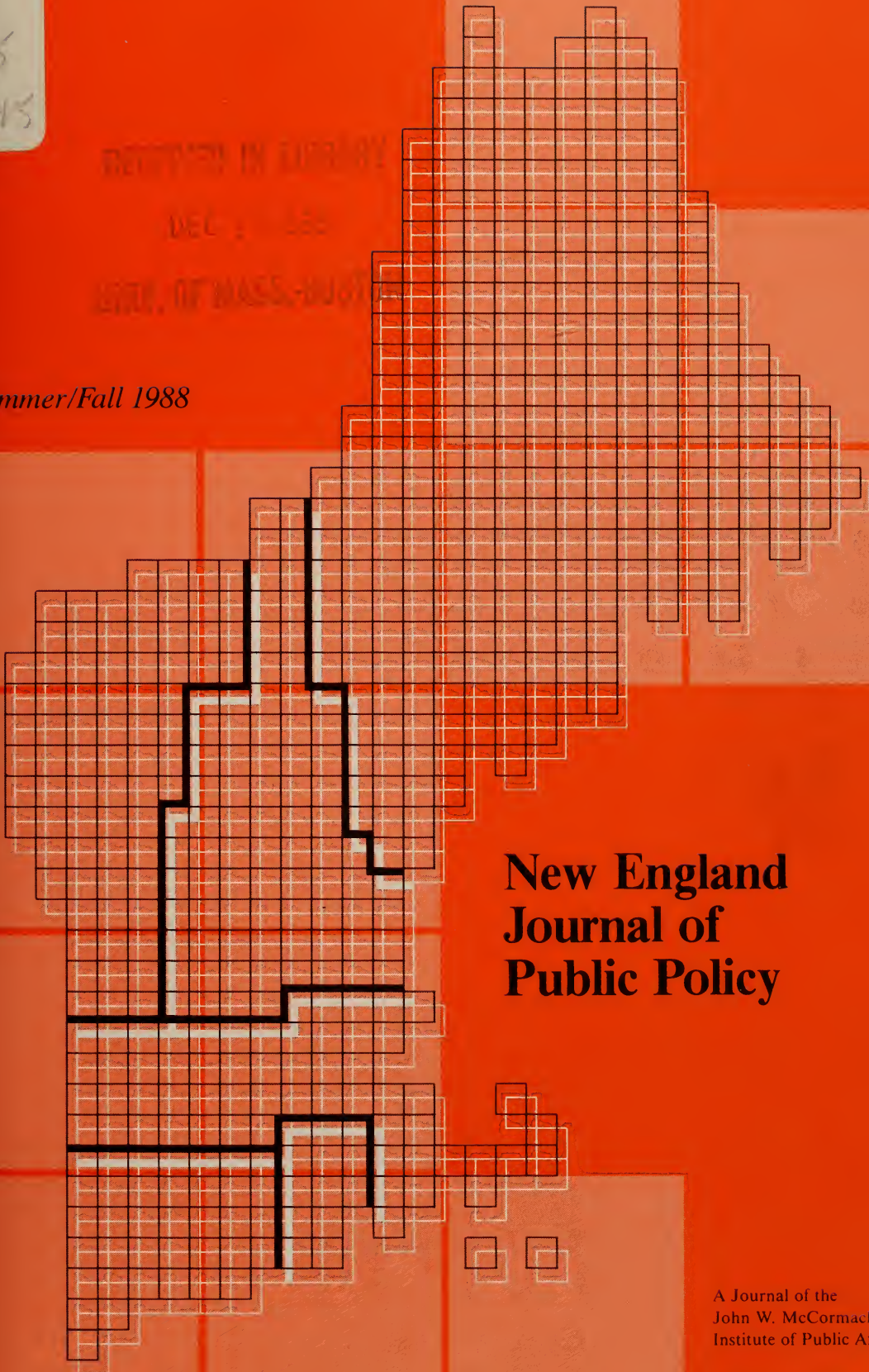




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New England Journal of Public Policy

A Journal of the
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University of Massachusetts
at Boston

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Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

For months on end we were subjected to the rituals of irrelevance: to posturing as patriotism, incoherence as eloquence, innuendo as nuance, character assassination as candor, sound-bites as substance, carefully memorized one-liners as expressions of spontaneity, self-righteousness as self-deprecation. Misstatement, outright fabrication, deliberate falsehood, and conscious distortion were spewed out by spin-masters, merchants of manipulation, propagandists, pollsters, shysters of the slick and technicians of the fast fix, all in the name of the democratic process. Nor were the two presidential candidates, Michael Dukakis and George Bush, themselves immune to the malaise, proving themselves extraordinarily adept time and again at not addressing any of the excruciatingly difficult choices a new administration will have to make.

But the realities the new president will face cannot be indefinitely obscured. The prosperity we enjoy, the unparalleled splurge in consumption during the 1980s, has been fueled by borrowing against the future. Although this observation is not especially new—and repetition has robbed it of urgency—what we have yet to adequately grasp, that is grasp to the point where the knowledge impels action, is the enormous cost of our excesses. The inescapable reality that that cost must now be met limits severely the choices open to us and has unsettling implications for the kind of society we may bequeath our children. We called the tune, danced with abandon to its seductive rhythms; now we must pay the piper.

The extent of our difficulties eludes us because we want it to; denial is the preferred panacea for the unpalatable. In 1980, the United States was the world's leading creditor nation; today it is the world's largest debtor nation. Eight years ago the United States had a position of preeminence in the world economy, which ensured that it was in control of its own economic policies; today it is in the position of supplicant, dependent on the goodwill of the countries that lend it money to finance the continuing extravaganza.

By 1990, 37 cents of every federal tax dollar will go to servicing the interest on the federal debt, and at least 3 percent of the country's national income will go to servicing the external debt. In 1980, the federal debt would have required 26 cents out of every dollar of income to pay it off — approximately the same as a hundred years ago; today, the federal debt amounts to 42 cents of every dollar of income produced. The government consistently absorbs almost three-quarters of private and business savings to meet its debt

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obligations; what is left is woefully insufficient to finance new business investment. As a result the rate of growth of the country's productive capacity is just over 1 percent a year, and the amount of capital at the disposal of the U.S. worker is no higher now than it was in 1980. Whatever growth occurs in the next four years will hardly be sufficient to cover the mounting interest on the federal debt and the balance of payments deficit, leaving little or no room for increasing standards of living. Our options are almost elegantly simple: either federal spending must be cut or taxes must be increased — matters on which no consensus has emerged — and the country's economic and fiscal houses put in order, if we are not permanently to mortgage the future for the present and sell our children's economic birthright.

What makes this picture bleaker still and the probable consequences of the painful alternatives we face more disturbing is the related fact that the false prosperity itself has skewed the economy in all kinds of undesirable ways. It has increased inequality, squeezed the middle classes, and raised the specter of a society increasingly polarized into two groups: the haves and the have-nots. In *The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America*, economists Barry Bluestone and Ben Harrison have documented this development with unimpeachable detail. Their research indicates that 57 percent of all jobs created between 1979 and 1987 paid poverty-level incomes or less; 34 percent paid middle incomes and 9 percent higher incomes. In comparison, in 1979 low-income jobs accounted for just 31 percent of all jobs, middle-income jobs for 65 percent, and higher-income jobs for only 4 percent. The trend is unmistakable: the broad jobs base of the middle classes is being eroded.

The *New England Journal of Public Policy* frequently addresses these questions of increasing inequality in the face of growing prosperity, entrenched poverty in the face of economic growth. Rising tides, it is quite clear, do not lift all boats; many capsize and some go under. In this issue, we continue our focus on these questions.

Sally Brewster Moulton examines socioeconomic trends in Roxbury, Massachusetts, between 1960 and 1985. Her findings indicate that despite growth in income, better labor force participation, higher educational achievements, and the presence of a black middle class, Roxbury residents as a whole have tended to fall further behind citizens of both the city of Boston and the larger Boston SMSA. Given Boston's recent unprecedented growth and the spectacular performance of the Massachusetts economy in recent years, her conclusion that "the income gap in particular has widened substantially, and the incidence of poverty remains at an extremely high level" should be a matter of concern for policymakers. Nor can Roxbury's relatively poor performance be attributed to a "culture of poverty." Roxbury census tracts with the highest labor force participation and the lowest unemployment rates often had poverty rates that were sometimes exceptionally high compared to those of Boston and the Boston SMSA. Moulton's data strongly suggest that it is the prevalence of the working poor — a segment of the population "which, despite working on a regular and more or less full-time basis and therefore expounding the work ethic, nevertheless remains stuck in poverty" — that accounts for the continuing high levels of deprivation in Roxbury. The problem, she argues, is structural. In Boston "key social institutions [education, for example] have evolved in ways that, whether intentionally or not, limit the participation, and thus the progress, of racial and economic minorities."

William Crown also places a great deal of emphasis on structure — in this case the structure of labor markets — in his analysis of the changing economic status of the elderly population in Boston. He finds that, regardless of family status, elderly blacks have had systematically higher poverty rates than elderly whites, and elderly females higher pov-

erty rates than elderly males. He attributes these patterns to the structural characteristics of the labor market: women and blacks tend to be paid less than white males, to have interrupted work histories, and to work in industries and occupations with poor pension coverage. Poor older persons tend to be much more dependent on income from Social Security and public assistance than other elderly because they have largely been bypassed by one of the major reasons for income growth among the older population — the growth in pension income. Moreover, since labor force participation rates among the aged poor are already high, programs to increase employment opportunities offer little promise.

The role of institutional relationships in the development and implementation of public policy is a theme in both Richard Hogarty's article on the search for a Massachusetts chancellor of higher education and James Glinski's on the role of the Catholic church during the school desegregation crisis in Boston. Hogarty examines in great detail the search for a chancellor conducted by the Massachusetts Board of Regents in 1986, a search process, he concludes, that was flawed from its inception, an almost textbook case of "what not to do." By allowing outsiders to participate in their search, the Regents, he argues, "unwittingly gave up a certain degree of autonomy at the outset." Ostensibly, their actions were well intentioned, but in trying to make the process more democratic they succeeded only in making the Board of Regents "susceptible to political manipulation that it could not withstand in its bureaucratic infancy." Hogarty's case study forcefully makes the case for having public education boards find new ways to engage in dialogue with state government officials, if only to facilitate the development of procedures to properly manage "the dichotomy of tensions between legitimate political objectives and legitimate academic objectives."

James Glinski, like Hogarty, also emphasizes the role of the institution, the particular configuration of arrangements that mold it, its history and structure, and its relationship to its larger environment in the evolution of public policy. Thus, the Catholic church's failure to play a more significant role during the school desegregation crisis in Boston is placed in the context of its failure over the decades to develop a coherent urban policy. Criticisms of the church, which suggest that it allowed its schools to become a haven for students attempting to escape busing, are, in Glinski's analysis, an oversimplification of a complex situation.

Shaun O'Connell reviews a selection of readings for would-be presidents. None of our recent presidents — going back to Dwight Eisenhower — has been a reader of "imaginative literature." While this is not, perhaps, entirely unexpected and may be indicative of the pressures on their time rather than an intrinsic aversion to literature, it should nevertheless at least lead us to ask whether their visions of who we are and our possibilities are limited by their failure to "confront some of the implications raised by serious works of the imagination, works that force us to face mysteries in the world and in ourselves." And finally, James C. Thomson, Jr., in his vivid memoir "Refugee in New England," shows how our sense of place is central to the way in which we see ourselves and to our sense of belonging.

The Search for a Massachusetts Chancellor:

Autonomy and Politics in Higher Education

Richard A. Hogarty

Political scientists have not devoted much attention to the politics of higher education. Their reluctance is hard to explain since the material for study is close at hand and the subject offers ample research opportunities. The search for a chancellor conducted by the Massachusetts Board of Regents in 1986 aroused considerable public attention and controversy. This case study examines that controversy along with the tensions that arise when academic and political forces collide. Few searches in academia are perfect and none is a morality play. This one proved to be no exception. This article is an attempt to reconstruct the controversy and explain its causes and consequences.

Trying to keep education free of politics is a favorite theme of reformers. In exploring this central theme, the author finds that theory often crumbles in the face of unpredictable events. He emphasizes the hard choices that the participants had to make amidst their continuous efforts to resolve dilemmas. The underlying argument that higher education is so technical and professional that only a professional educator can manage it is also examined.

As an independent agency in state government, the Board of Regents — like any other actor in the political game — has to concern itself with political realities. If the governor has political power, the agency may “knuckle under” to him; if he lacks power, the agency will probably turn elsewhere to seek the support it needs to sustain itself in the competitive world of budgets and patronage and the authority to expand operations or to grow in personnel and importance. Better communication between the Regents and the political leadership is necessary to avoid the repetition of such conflict.

Among the threats to the viability of American education that seem to abound in our age is the challenge to the public university. Retaining the ability to make fair and autonomous decisions is of critical importance to its operation. Inappropriate political interference with line authority in the governance of higher education threatens that independence. The threat is a grave one because it goes to the heart of the academic enterprise. In delivering the Askwith Lecture at Harvard in 1986, Clifton Wharton, then chancellor

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Chronology, 1985–1986

December 10	Chancellor Duff resigns; search committee appointed.
January 8	Search committee meets with governor and obtains commitment from him to press for early legislation to increase the chancellor's salary.
February 11	Board of Regents adopts procedural resolution to abide by search committee's recommendations.
March 15	Application deadline; 107 candidates apply.
March 27	Pay raise bill (H-5474) filed.
April 3	Screening subcommittee recommends 32 candidates.
April 16	Public hearing on pay raise bill (H-5474).
April 17	Search committee narrows field to 12 candidates.
May 2–3	First round of candidate interviews.
May 6	Pay raise bill in new form (H-5639) reported favorably by the Public Service Committee.
May 14	Ylvisaker alerts Board of Regents that search committee will not be able to report final selection of candidates on June 9 as originally planned.
May 22	Search committee makes penultimate cut and reduces field to 6 candidates.
June 9	Board of Regents attempts to abandon search but instead authorizes a maximum of 6 finalists.
June 12–18	Second round of candidate interviews. Speaker Keverian refuses to advance pay raise bill unless Collins appears among the finalists.
June 19	Search committee selects 4 finalists; Collins eliminated.
July 1	Board of Regents ignores 4 finalists and elects Collins as new chancellor; Ylvisaker resigns in protest.
July 2	Governor intervenes in dispute, replaces Regents chairman Beaubien with Lashman, and announces his intention to overturn the Board of Regents' decision. House of Representatives unanimously endorses Collins as chancellor.
July 3	Governor contacts Collins and warns him not to resign from legislature or to proceed on present course.
July 6	<i>Boston Globe</i> breaks story that Collins asked Duff to sell tickets to Speaker's campaign fundraiser.
July 7	Eisner resigns from Board of Regents in protest of Collins's appointment.
July 8	Collins rejects 90-day contract offered by Lashman.
July 10	Collins appears on television to argue his case.
July 18	Six Regents call for special meeting of Board to act on stalled contract negotiations.
July 24	Seven Regents ask attorney general to rule on legality of Collins appointment.
July 25	Attorney general rules Collins legally elected but serves at pleasure of Board of Regents.
July 31	Governor appoints three new Regents and gains control of the Board.
August 5	Board of Regents reopens search and denies Collins one-year performance contract.
August 18	Newell drops out of race, claiming atmosphere too politicized.
September 9	Board of Regents fires Collins and elects Jenifer as new chancellor.

Members and Terms of Office Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education, 1986

Appointees of Governor Edward King

- *David J. Beaubien (1980–1988)
- *Nicholas Boraski (1982–1992)
- Gerard F. Doherty (1982–1987)
- Janet Eisner (1980–1986)
- *George Ellison (1980–1982)
(1985–1990)
- *J. John Fox (1981–1989)
- James Howell (1982–1986)
- David Paresky (1980–1986)
- *Elizabeth B. Rawlins (1980–1982)
(1984–1988)
- Edward T. Sullivan (1982–1987)

Appointees of Governor Michael Dukakis

- Mary Lou Anderson (1984–1989)
- Paul S. Doherty (1986–1991)
- Ellen C. Guiney (1986–1991)
- Kathleen Harrington (1984–1988)
- Joe M. Henson (1986–1991)
- L. Edward Lashman (1986–1990)
- Paul Marks (1984–1990)
- Norma Markey, student member (1986–1987)
- Hassan Minor (1984–1989)
- Paul N. Ylvisaker (1984–1986)

*Initially appointed by King and reappointed by Dukakis.

**Initially appointed by King and then appointed by Dukakis.

of the state higher education system in New York, explained the crux of the problem: “Public colleges and universities are identical to their counterparts in the independent sector in having no margin of tolerance for political quid pro quo. That which compromises the integrity of their administration and governance also compromises the integrity of their teaching, research, and service. It is a short step to making faculty appointments or awarding tenure on the basis of political persuasion and ideological preference.”¹ Educators therefore tend to take a very dim view of political intrusion into the academic community, where it is seen as an infringement of the cherished principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

In legal terms, public colleges and universities are creatures of the state. As such, they operate in a political environment that makes them accountable to the public and at the same time exposes them to steady external pressures. One can argue that influence over a publicly funded institution is appropriate in achieving democratic responsibility. Similarly, the argument can be made that a university, like a hospital or a motor vehicle office, ought to be autonomous. In reality, however, no university, whether public or private, enjoys complete autonomy. Both are subject to the constraints imposed by government funding and to the decisions handed down by state and federal courts. In the public domain, the boundaries between democratic accountability and academic autonomy are not always clearly defined. Most controversies in state higher education involve the clash of these competing demands.²

For higher education as a whole, the issue of autonomy arises when a new chief executive officer is being hired. The differences between the public and private sectors are revealing. Hiring a president at a private university is customarily shrouded in secrecy. New England schools such as Brown and Dartmouth, for example, neither reveal the names of their candidates nor keep the outside world informed of the progress of the search. Furthermore, formal offers are not made to qualified prospects unless their acceptance is assured. By sharp contrast, public institutions operate virtually in a glass house when performing the same function. Something more is involved. The recruitment of campus executives in the public sector is at best a delicate and arduous task, as various groups and individuals each with its own agenda seek to become active if not predominant in the selection process. Such searches must be done in compliance with affirmative action rules and with the requirements of “open meeting” laws, which are designed to ensure accountability. Studies indicate that in states such as Florida, such laws (sometimes

referred to as “sunshine legislation”) may be more of a hindrance than a help in attracting the most qualified people.³ Preserving confidentiality, as the private sector well knows, is often the key to a successful search. Candidates for the job do not want their names bandied about for fear of jeopardizing their current positions. And if they are not accepted for the post, such disclosure may impair their future opportunities elsewhere. The courts generally recognize certain privacy rights of the individual placed in such circumstances. Balancing these rights against the obligations of sunshine laws is indeed a difficult and perplexing exercise.

Procedures are normally adopted to protect the confidentiality of the candidates and to guard against the impact of publicity and the cruder forms of direct interference. Even the most elaborate procedures, however, do not necessarily guarantee such protection. Leaks to the press and other premature disclosures are almost bound to occur.⁴ Public awareness of the candidates is unavoidable at a certain point. Since the selection process involves dynamic tensions among the competing interests, it may well become politicized. Once this happens, the politics of the search run a course similar to the politics of any other controversial dispute in a democratic society. Some people want something from government and build a coalition of influence to get it, while other people want something different and build a countervailing coalition to block or modify the design of the first group. Compelled to conduct its educational business in a highly charged political atmosphere, a search committee may stray from its proper course, despite its best efforts and intentions.

Perhaps there is no better illustration of this phenomenon than the search for a chancellor of higher education in Massachusetts in 1986. During the first six months of that year, the state Board of Regents conducted a national search for a new chancellor to head its public higher education system. Before long, the search developed into a fierce power struggle both inside and outside the Board. The media seized on it. Powerful forces — some obvious, some subtle — exerted tremendous pressures in their attempts to influence the outcome. Much of the politics and press attention focused on James Collins, a state representative from Amherst and an erstwhile supporter of public higher education, who became a central figure in the struggle. Bypassing the four finalists that their search had produced, the Regents appointed Collins as chancellor and thereby invoked a storm of protest. The fact that they had picked a state legislator rather than a professional educator did not sit well with Governor Michael Dukakis and his followers. Dukakis opposed the Collins appointment. Claiming that the selection process had been seriously flawed, the governor intervened in the dispute and proceeded to pack the sixteen-member Board of Regents with a new chairman and three new members who were favorably disposed to his own position. By so doing, he was able to get the Board of Regents to reconsider the Collins appointment and to remove Collins from office. Meanwhile, Speaker of the House George Keverian criticized the governor’s intervention and vigorously defended Collins. Subsequently, the realigned Board ousted Collins and chose Franklyn Jenifer, a black educator from New Jersey and a previous finalist. Values and vested interests were at stake as well as pride and ambition.

The chancellor search controversy must be understood in the context of a very complex political system involving history, culture, personalities, institutional arrangements, special interests, and ethnic group participation. To be sure, the political culture of Massachusetts colors all aspects of its institutional life, including the most rarefied and lofty level of higher education, highlighting perhaps more than simply a division between academic and political interests. Over time, politicians in the Bay State have adopted a proprietary attitude toward its public colleges and universities. They regard them as their

prized possessions, if not their own creations. To use the parlance of Beacon Hill legislators, they “own” them. Some of these institutions had become legislators’ fiefdoms. In addition, the higher education system was a patronage haven for several ex-legislators. Unless one understands these dynamics, one cannot fully comprehend or appreciate the particulars of this specific case.

In many respects, the main battle over the search for a chancellor reflected what has been going on in Massachusetts higher education for the past twenty years — a struggle between the traditional politics of the Irish and the new politics of insurgent reformers. It also set in motion the bifactionalism within the state Democratic party that pitted conservative Ed King Democrats against liberal Mike Dukakis Democrats and the legislative and executive branches of state government against each other. Urban-rural rivalries and other old antagonisms were rekindled between those who favored centralization of the system in Boston and those who favored decentralization. Among the latter were those who sought to restore UMass/Amherst to its once preeminent position. The controversy was further aggravated by the enduring tension between public and private institutions of higher learning. Indeed, the elite private institutions, especially those of world-class caliber, have always enjoyed center stage, much to the chagrin and intense jealousy of the public sector. Before the main battle ended, it was transformed into a public versus private skirmish with the trappings of an Irish-Harvard, town-and-gown confrontation.

To add to the political drama, Regent James Howell was accused of a conflict of interest by the state Ethics Commission in arguing against the approval of a graduate nursing program at UMass/Boston. The new program would be competing with a financially troubled one at Boston University, where Howell served as a trustee. Although he actually abstained from voting on the issue, he was nonetheless charged with a conflict. As a consequence, legislation was passed that clarified the relationship between the law establishing the Board of Regents and the law establishing the Ethics Commission. The matter did not end here, however. The legislation was promptly vetoed by the governor, and the governor’s veto, which evoked additional public criticism from Speaker Keverian, was later overridden by the General Court. But the furor over this effort to censure and then to exonerate Howell took a back seat to the controversy sparked by the effort to remove Collins.

All of this activity occurred in 1986 while the newly created Board of Regents was still struggling to organize itself and define its role. For the most part the public was baffled by the intricate political game being played at the State House. Public opinion on the governor’s handling of the chancellor search controversy was strongly divided. Some people looked on the whole affair as smart politics, especially for an incumbent governor who was currently seeking reelection and planning to run for the U.S. presidency in 1988. Others viewed it as a manipulative exercise of power that was as blatant as it was transparent, and of doubtful legality as well. Still others were too confused by the Board of Regents’ overturning of its original decision to know quite what to make of it. Before the political flak abated, the participants themselves felt that something had gone wrong. My own recollections are those of an interested faculty member who viewed the dispute from a discreet distance. The account that follows is based primarily on the public record and on personal interviews obtained from the principal participants.⁵

On the assumption that a look backward may illuminate the way ahead, I will examine the central issue of process and analyze why things went awry. Inevitably mistakes were made, and those were mostly procedural. Some of the troubles were systemic and thus unavoidable. Others were not, but something like them could have been predicted by

considering the difficulty the Regents had encountered in their search for a chancellor in 1981. (More about that botched effort will be discussed shortly.) Anyone looking at the events that took place in 1986 cannot adequately explain why they occurred without raising a set of deeper questions.

What was the nature of the decision process itself? What preconceptions did the participants bring with them? How did their perceptions play against each other? Under what sort of pressures were they operating? In what specific ways was the process flawed? What midcourse corrective measures were at their disposal? Did the Regents act in such a way as to reduce their own autonomy? If the Collins forces could control the Regents, why could they not also shape a search committee to serve their interests? How did it come about that the anti-Collins faction depended on the search committee to achieve its ends while the pro-Collins group relied on the Regents to do so, when the former was a creature of the latter? Answering these kinds of illuminating questions should shed light on what actually happened. The questions, of course, answer themselves much more clearly after the fact than before. My list is far from complete. Many other questions may need to be asked and answered. Even so, this approach at least takes into account the different ways in which key actors saw the episode and their roles in it.

The Struggle for Autonomy

American public higher education originated in Massachusetts in the late 1830s, when Horace Mann departed from the General Court to become the state's first secretary of education. An educator of great vision, Mann presided over numerous reforms, including the establishment of a series of normal schools to train teachers. These were the prototype public colleges. In 1862, the U.S. Congress passed the Morrill Act, which gave land grants to each state for establishing colleges to train students in agriculture and mechanics. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology accepted the mechanical training mandate of this federal program. To address the other mandate, a state college of agriculture was created in Amherst in 1863.

Before the Civil War, Massachusetts was largely rural, Yankee Protestant, and agricultural. By the turn of the century, it had become largely urban and industrial and increasingly Catholic. The public colleges met these new social realities as best they could, but they competed with an illustrious array of private institutions that benefited greatly from the windfall of capitalist philanthropy. Bridging the gap between them was costly, and the public colleges suffered as a result. Subjected to benign neglect, they were starved financially and abused politically.

The hegemony of the independent sector explains in large measure why Massachusetts was so slow to provide more generous support for public higher education. Under these circumstances, the state college of agriculture at Amherst remained small in size and stature. It did not achieve university status until 1947, when its enrollment still hovered between two and three thousand students. At that time, it paled by comparison to the large land grant schools in the midwestern and western states. "Mass Aggie," however, yearned to play catch-up and to emulate states like California, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana, which had a healthy mixture of strong private institutions and eminent public universities. But change came slowly. During the 1950s, Governor Foster Furculo championed the establishment of a network of community colleges. Despite its success, Massachusetts sent a smaller proportion of its high school students on to college than any other state except

Maine and Mississippi. Lacking the prestige and financial clout of their distinguished private counterparts, the public institutions suffered from an inferiority complex, considering themselves as second best. This attitude, which was rooted in historical developments, persists to some extent today.

By the early 1960s, conditions began to change sharply. The era of the Great Society, which witnessed greater federal involvement in and funding of higher education, marked a decisive turning point in the evolution of public higher education in the Bay State. During that decade, enrollment at UMass/Amherst soared to 23,000 students, and more than seventy new buildings were constructed to accommodate them. Capital outlay funds at the state university rose from \$1.6 million to \$89.8 million. New campuses were created at Boston in 1964 and at Worcester in 1968. The state built a medical school in Worcester with federal assistance, and the new teaching hospital overlooking Lake Quinsigamond was soon providing better care than had previously been available in the area. Mergers of small technical colleges led to the establishment of Southeastern Massachusetts University in 1969 and the University of Lowell in 1973. At the same time, the community college system was expanded and the old normal schools were converted into modern liberal arts colleges. New community colleges appeared in cities like Brockton and Lynn in the east and Pittsfield and Springfield in the west.

Spearheading this expansion drive were leading Irish Democratic politicians such as Maurice Donahue, Kevin Harrington, Robert Quinn, and George Kenneally, who were all close to the party's blue-collar base. Solving the problem of the 1960s with such dramatic expansion required the combined efforts of both the executive and legislative branches. What had happened? Apparently the demand had always been there. Why was the legislature now willing to meet that demand? Or, to put it somewhat differently, why did it take the Irish so long to commit public funds to the education of their children? No single explanation is satisfactory. Part of the answer lies in the fact that the Republicans controlled the governorship and both houses of the legislature, with few exceptions, from the Civil War to almost the middle of the twentieth century. The Democrats did not gain control of the House of Representatives until 1948. They did not capture the Senate until 1958. Another part of the answer had to do with the dramatic transformation of Catholic institutions such as Boston College and Holy Cross, which began to recruit faculty and students nationwide. Such private colleges became too expensive for middle-income and working-class families. Even more prohibitive were the skyrocketing tuition costs at the private medical schools. Consequently, Senate President Donahue and Speaker Quinn made increased funding a top legislative priority. In fact, it was mostly Boston College alumni on Beacon Hill who pushed for the creation of UMass/Boston. They saw it as a way to pick up the slack in the private system and to service their blue-collar constituents. UMass/Boston, dedicated to the pursuit of the liberal arts, was envisioned by its founding faculty as the "Harvard for the working class."

With the passage of the landmark Willis-Harrington Act in 1965, the public sector won considerable fiscal and institutional autonomy. As Robert Wood observes: "All through the sixties, higher education in Massachusetts was on a roll. Enrollments swelled as post-war baby boomers came of age. Federal support for research and development, the student aid programs of the Great Society, liberal state appropriations for public institutions, and the first sizable endowment drives for many private ones provided sufficient and occasionally ample resources. Civil-rights legislation released the pent-up college demands for minorities. Capital outlays for new campuses, classrooms, and laboratories

were often authorized even before architects completed plans. The times were golden.”⁶ Values and social demographics were changing. The new informational age spawned by computers was dawning. With the abundance of state and federal funding, the entire system prospered. Nothing since has matched that period of accomplishment.

Creation of the Board of Regents

Those years of euphoria placated all but the most ardent proponents of expanded growth. Regulating such growth and the way in which the public system was governed presented a formidable challenge. Under the Willis-Harrington legislation, the system was loosely organized into five “segments,” with governance delegated to separate boards of lay trustees. Their efforts were coordinated by a central Board of Higher Education, whose primary functions were to develop a master plan and to review budgetary requests. But the Board of Higher Education never obtained from the legislature a budget or staff that was sufficient to carry out these responsibilities. Opposition to the Board of Higher Education came mostly from UMass/Amherst, which did not want any state agency interfering with its flagship status or with its plans to catch up with the more prestigious Big Ten state universities. Much of this resistance was engineered by Winthrop Dakin, an astute Yankee attorney from Amherst, who had opposed the creation of the Board of Higher Education. Ironically, Dakin wound up as its chairman. In this capacity, he implemented the Amherst game plan, which was to keep the Board of Higher Education weak. The private sector, which also desired to protect its independence from the Board of Higher Education, aided and abetted that game plan.⁷

A succession of chancellors (Richard Millard, Patrick McCarthy, Leroy Keith, Edward McGuire, and Laura Clausen), whose selection was embroiled in controversy, managed the Board of Higher Education. Keith, who later became president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, was the first black to head the commonwealth’s system. In addition to its being underfunded and understaffed, the Board of Higher Education was further compromised in 1971 with the awkward presence of a secretary of educational affairs, a position that had been established as part of an extensive reorganization of state government. This institutional arrangement resulted in substantial overlap of statutory authority and responsibilities.

By the mid-1970s, with the Arab oil embargo, soaring inflation, general economic uncertainty, and the first Dukakis administration imposing across-the-board funding cuts for public higher education, this cumbersome and stifling bureaucracy proved most unsatisfactory. The hegemony of the segmented boards not only resulted in a disparate set of academic programs and duplication of effort but also replicated budget hearings that were prone to internecine battles in the competition for what were now scarce state funds. As John Millett observed: “What had been demonstrated in Massachusetts was the inability of a state coordinating board and a secretary of education to bring about substantial change.”⁸

As a result, Kevin Harrington of Salem, who had succeeded Maurice Donahue as Senate president, was anxious to replace the Board of Higher Education with a better institutional arrangement. A special legislative commission headed by state Senator Walter Boverini of Lynn was established in 1977 to study the problem, but its work was interrupted by a gubernatorial election in 1978 that saw conservative Edward King defeat the liberal incumbent Michael Dukakis in a bitterly contested Democratic primary. Buoyed by his startling upset, King went on to win the governorship. Like his two predecessors in the

corner office, King advocated the creation of a strong central governing board, but he could not break through the stalemate of forces surrounding the reorganization of public higher education. The main obstacle was James Collins. Strongly influenced by Winthrop Dakin, the young state representative from Amherst, who chaired the House Education Committee, remained vehemently opposed to the idea of a central board. He saw it as a major threat to the autonomy of UMass/Amherst. Although no Irish symbolism attaches to the rural town of Amherst, nevertheless the flagship campus was located in his base of political power. From the mid to late 1970s, Collins succeeded in blocking a series of reorganization proposals.⁹

In the meantime, it took three governors (Francis Sargent, Dukakis, and King) to restructure public higher education and to streamline its bureaucracy. In May 1980, the Boverini commission submitted its report, but its recommendations were torpedoed. Exasperated by such obstruction, the Irish Democratic troika of Governor King, Speaker Thomas McGee, and Senate President William Bulger broke the stalemate and agreed to enact major reform. (By this time, Bulger had succeeded Harrington in the top Senate post.) The deal was supposedly struck while the three men were on a trip together in Ireland. In what amounted to an end run around Collins, they achieved the reform measure by use of an "outside section" that was appended to the appropriations bill for FY81. Since the issue was resolved by a conference committee, it did not require either a public hearing or a floor debate. Hence, Collins could not kill the measure. Both state Representative John Finnegan and state Senator Chester Atkins, who chaired their respective Ways and Means committees, were responsible for engineering this feat. What became known as the Higher Education Reorganization Act of 1980 was thereby enacted.

The new law abolished the Board of Higher Education, the community college and state college boards, and the position of secretary of educational affairs. These instrumentalities were replaced by a powerful Board of Regents that was given both coordinating and governing functions. Under this strong legislation, the Board of Regents was made responsible for long-range planning, personnel policies, collective bargaining, and review and approval of academic programs. In addition, it was made responsible for overseeing the charters of independent degree-granting institutions in the private sector. All in all, the Board of Regents was assigned the broad powers necessary for achieving unity and cohesion in what was then a highly fragmented and unwieldy system.¹⁰ What this meant in blunter language was that the authority of the central board would be increased at the inevitable expense of the local boards.

By statutory language, the Board of Regents was granted a seven-month transition period before it became operational. During this orderly transition, which extended from August 1980 to March 1981, Paul Guzzi served as its temporary chancellor. He was secretary of state and a former state legislator from Newton. While he presided in an interim capacity, the Board of Regents conducted a search for his permanent replacement. Guzzi himself did not become a candidate. Worth momentary note is the fact that the search committee in 1980–81 was composed exclusively of Regents. There were no outsiders. The chancellor's salary was fixed by statute at \$54,500, which proved to be a significant drawback to attracting the best applicants. According to Regent George Ellison, everyone entered the search expecting that the salary would be raised to \$95,000. Four highly qualified educators from out of state were selected as finalists. Albert Bowker, the chancellor at the University of California at Berkeley, was the leading contender. But the Regents were unable to persuade the General Court to increase the chancellor's salary, and none of

the finalists would accept the job because of the low salary. Consequently, the first phase ended in stalemate. Seven months of searching amounted to an exercise in futility. The search had to be reopened.¹¹

In the second phase, three contenders emerged. They were David Bartley, Kermit Morrissey, and Franklin Patterson. All three came from within Massachusetts. Morrissey was the former president of Boston State College, and Patterson was the former president of Hampshire College. The front-runner, Bartley, was no stranger to state politics. He was the former speaker of the House and the sitting president of Holyoke Community College. The Regents rejected him because he came across in his interview more as a politician than as an academic leader. They also failed to pick either Morrissey or Patterson.¹² In a surprise move, they drafted John Duff, president of the University of Lowell. Duff was also the founder and head of the Public Council of College and University Presidents and as such was serving as academic adviser to the search committee. Although he apparently did not seek the job, some people resented the fact that he was an insider choice.

A transplanted New Jersey educator, Duff was given a \$10,500 salary increase, but the additional compensation that he was promised was not forthcoming. He was a feisty Irishman who proved to be very controversial. Despite questions from skeptics about his abilities and policy initiatives, Duff provided strong leadership, especially in dealing with systemic problems. But his management style was autocratic and confrontational. He also frequently mixed politics and education. All of these traits eventually landed him in trouble.

Among Duff's more notable accomplishments was the successful merger of Boston State College with UMass/Boston. More than anything else, this merger demonstrated to a tax-conscious public the willingness and determination of the Board of Regents to terminate programs that were no longer cost-effective. Its decision had an unpopular impact on local loyalties and aspirations, however. Boston State College, which had been founded in 1852, had powerful allies on Beacon Hill. A hue and cry went up, but the Board of Regents stuck to its guns. In implementing the merger plan, the Regents acted as a buffer by taking the political heat off the Boston legislative delegation for the demise of its state teachers' college.

By 1986, the public system had grown huge and complex. Taken together, it encompassed three state universities, nine state teachers' colleges, and fifteen community colleges, with a total enrollment of 180,000 students and a work force of 14,000 employees. The Board of Regents chancellor administered a budget in excess of \$700 million, which included a \$58 million scholarship program and a capital outlay plan. In addition, he supervised a staff of seventy-two people and an office budget of \$3 million. As the primary advocate for higher education, he was its most visible leader, both symbolically and operationally. His continued effectiveness depended in large measure on his personal style and his professional competence.

Duff Resigns and Beaubien Appoints Search Committee

On December 10, 1985, John Duff suddenly resigned as chancellor under the cloud of allegations of improper political fundraising. He had sent a letter to the Regents soliciting them to buy tickets to a \$100-a-plate dinner that was given for the benefit of Speaker George Keverian. Subsequently, the print media revealed that it was James Collins who had asked Duff to sell the tickets. This solicitation, many State House observers believed, was part of a larger scheme by Regent John Fox to rehabilitate Collins politically.

After Duff's departure, the picture was further clouded by the revelation of a major sex scandal that eventually led to the indictment of the president of Westfield State College and the payment of \$10,000 as a legal settlement to the student involved. The fallout from this affair radiated widely. To add to the Board of Regents' administrative chaos and disarray, a \$2 million discrepancy was discovered in its computer account.

Gerard Indelicato, the governor's educational adviser, had a long-standing and bitter feud with Duff that stemmed from a dispute over tuition policy. Duff distrusted Indelicato and had found him to be duplicitous in dealing with the legislature. Both men disliked each other intensely. Indelicato saw the fundraising incident as the perfect excuse to oust Duff. This was the precipitating event, as we shall see, that set off a political chain reaction. In his turn, before leaving office Duff had warned Governor Dukakis about Indelicato.

Against the background of these mishaps, Board of Regents chairman David Beaubien moved quickly to fill the leadership vacuum created by Duff's departure. Beaubien had served on the Board since its inception in 1980. He was a senior vice president for a high-technology firm (EG&G), where he was responsible for new business ventures. A UMass/Amherst graduate in engineering, Beaubien lived in Montague in western Massachusetts. His residence was located within state Senator John Olver's district and near James Collins's district in Hampshire County.

At its December 10 meeting, which Regent Gerard F. Doherty missed, the Board of Regents named Joseph Finnegan as the acting interim chancellor. Finnegan, whose brother helped create the Board of Regents, came from a well-known political family in Dorchester. He was not an academic. (Doherty, who soon became a major player in the search, was a former state legislator and former chairman of the state Democratic party. He had helped deliver Bunker Hill Community College, along with an MDC hockey rink, to his predominantly Irish working-class constituency in Charlestown.) At the same meeting, the Board approved Beaubien's appointment of an eleven-member search committee. Unlike the original search committee, this one was composed of six Regents and five non-Regents. Since 1980, the Board of Regents had adopted a new policy governing searches that followed a national model and called for adding outside people to meet the multiple demands from the many constituencies within public higher education. The new policy also specified that once the Regents delegated the screening function to a committee, they could not resort to an alternative means for picking candidates.

Six of the Regents volunteered to serve on the search committee. Three of those were chosen and three other Regents were drafted. Of the volunteers, Doherty, Howell, Harrington, and Sullivan turned out to be Collins supporters; Rawlins and Minor were the other two volunteers. The final Regent representation on the search committee consisted of Mary Lou Anderson, Janet Eisner, James Howell, Hassan Minor, Edward Sullivan, and Paul Ylvisaker. The non-Regents were Joyce King, a trustee at Roxbury Community College; David Knapp, president of UMass; Robert Lee, a faculty member at Fitchburg State College; Laura Clausen, former Board of Higher Education chancellor who now served on the Board of Regents staff; and Eileen Parise, a student trustee at Southeastern Massachusetts University. Obviously, Duff's departure was anticipated, and Beaubien received help in producing these names. He had consulted with Duff and with vice chancellors Joseph Finnegan, Peter Mitchell, Roger Schinness, and Clare Van Ummersen. Staff member Jan Robinson had recommended Eileen Parise.¹³

There was no shortage of brains and knowledge among the people responsible for screening candidates. Nor did they lack gender balance and ethnic diversity. There were six men and five women. Nine of the eleven brought substantial experience in higher

education, though from different vantage points, and the other two were a student and a member of organized labor. There were two blacks and one Asian.

Paul Ylvisaker was asked to chair the search committee. He did not volunteer for the assignment. As the former dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, he brought with him both academic and political experience. In the mid to late 1960s, he had served as the first commissioner of community affairs in New Jersey. Before accepting his new assignment Ylvisaker made his conditions known. If he was going to put his professional reputation on the line, he insisted on conducting a fair and open search.¹⁴ Hassan Minor, a black academic who had taught courses in organizational behavior at MIT, was chosen as vice chairman. Janet Eisner, president of Emmanuel College, was the only person who had served on the original search committee in 1980–81.

Probing Assumptions

The participants approached their task with concerns and objectives colored by assumptions based on past experience. Even before the search had gotten under way, rumors began circulating that James Collins had sufficient votes on the Board of Regents to win the chancellorship. These rumors, which were not entirely without substance, created the impression that the outcome was predetermined. Meanwhile, Collins, who wanted to redeem his political stature, was busy lining up potential support. He discussed his candidacy at separate luncheon engagements with Mary Lou Anderson and David Knapp. Anderson, who lived in Worcester, belonged to several professional women's groups and chaired the Regents' subcommittee on affirmative action. Such early maneuvering raised sensitivity about whether there was to be a genuine search or merely the ratification of a decision that already had been made.

Not surprisingly, the participants soon divided into pro- and anti-Collins camps. The Collins backers saw the chancellor's job primarily in terms of generating legislative support for public higher education and obtaining the necessary funds to finance it. In 1984, while lobbying for a salary increase for the chancellor, Regent Edward Sullivan discovered that John Duff had become *persona non grata* on Beacon Hill.¹⁵ Duff's credibility problem stemmed in part from what was widely perceived as his expensive lifestyle. His deteriorating relations with the General Court had impaired his continued effectiveness.

As a result, the holdover King appointees on the Board of Regents, three of whom were on the search committee, now wanted someone whom the legislators liked and respected. In their eyes, James Collins was the ideal person. Endowed with abundant Irish charm and wit and popular among his peers, he was a seasoned Democratic politician with fourteen years of legislative experience. Thus, he could serve their interests well in the competition for state funding. As the former chairman of the joint Education Committee, the thirty-nine-year-old Collins had won his reputation in leading the fight for elementary and secondary school reform. A son of a taxi driver, the Hampshire County Democrat had graduated from UMass/Amherst in 1968 and from Suffolk Law School in 1984. He was also the protégé of Regent John Fox, who had close ties with former Speaker David Bartley.

In the view of many observers, Judge Fox saw the chancellorship as a way of rehabilitating Collins. The latter had been stripped of his committee chair in a House leadership fight in 1984. Collins had backed incumbent Speaker Thomas McGee in that fight, but McGee lost to George Keverian, who had promised rules reform in the lower House. No one played the inside political game better than Judge Fox. He had served as chief secretary to former Governor Paul A. Dever from 1949 to 1952. In 1972, he cosponsored the

Bartley-Fox bill, which served as a national model for handgun control legislation. As a former trustee of UMass, Fox was closely identified with its Boston campus.

It became clear that a combination of ethnic, class, and Democratic party loyalties were the main factors that shaped the thinking of the King appointees on the Board of Regents. The fact that Collins was an alumnus of UMass/Amherst made him all the more attractive to them. With a home-grown product of the public system right in their midst, they saw little or no need to conduct a national search. Brimming with confidence, they gave some thought to putting Collins in office without going through the motions of a search, but they decided against such a move.¹⁶

The anti-Collins camp, which was made up entirely of Governor Dukakis appointees led by Ylvisaker and Minor, operated with fundamentally divergent attitudes. They wanted to find the best educator in the nation or someone who knew how to manage a complex public organization. If that person happened to be a minority or female, so much the better. Affirmative action and the advancement of women's rights were values that they prized. Clearly they did not want to have another Irishman or a Beacon Hill crony in the post. While they desired someone who could develop a good rapport with the legislature, they did not see this dimension as an absolute prerequisite for the job. If they had to accept a legislator, they much preferred state Senator John Olver, who held an earned doctorate in chemistry from MIT. He had taught for several years at UMass/Amherst. Above all, they were looking for a tough-minded administrator who had experience in shaping academic policy and was familiar with the way bureaucracy works. Put another way, they wanted a "change agent" who could shake things up and turn the Board of Regents around in much the same way that Ira Jackson had done at the state Department of Revenue. Whether they could find such a person remained to be seen, but they were determined to cast as wide a net as possible.¹⁷

At a courtesy meeting held on January 8, 1986, Governor Dukakis revealed his assumptions to the search group. He indicated that he wanted a "cracker-jack" appointment but was hopeful that they might find a qualified person within the state. In the past, there had been a large turnover of people who had been recruited from out of state. He also wanted someone with political savvy who knew Massachusetts and could hit the ground running. Hassan Minor recalled the governor saying, "I'm not the least bit interested in academic deans who can't find their way through the State House."¹⁸ Dukakis expressed his dismay that nobody from Massachusetts had surfaced in the recent search for a new commissioner for the state Board of Education, which dealt with elementary and secondary schools.

At one point in the meeting, Ylvisaker attempted to flush out the governor by asking him a loaded question. "We have heard stories to the effect that somebody already has been picked for the chancellorship. How do you respond?" Dukakis said that he had heard similar "rumors coming over the transom," but as far as he was concerned there was no inside candidate for the job. He ended the meeting by telling the committee that he wanted "to keep politics out of the search" as much as possible.

Reaction to the meeting varied. The pro-Collins forces interpreted the governor's remarks as a "backhanded endorsement" of their man. The anti-Collins camp felt encouraged by his disclaimer about an inside candidate. Obviously, the governor had given them mixed signals. Had he defined more clearly the objective or outcome he had in mind, subsequent events might have been different. They might even have produced a happier result from his standpoint. Privately, he confided to Beaubien that he could live with someone who was not a traditional academic. In fact, the governor seriously considered his close friend and political adviser Edward Lashman as a possible candidate. But

Lashman, who came from the labor movement and lacked even a bachelor's degree, declined to be considered. After discussing the matter with David Bartley, Lashman concluded that his candidacy not only would be an affront to academic people but would also damage the governor politically.¹⁹

Dukakis did agree to the need for a more competitive chancellor's salary, and he promised to press for early legislative action. He did not keep his promise, however. That in itself became an issue. As James Howell lamented, "The pay raise issue was the albatross that hung above our ship."²⁰

Even more revealing was the exchange that took place between the governor and *Boston Globe* reporter Steve Curwood. In an exclusive personal interview intended for publication, Curwood asked Dukakis about the charges that his administration was not fully supportive of UMass/Amherst as the flagship institution. Dukakis answered, "We aren't California, we're not Texas, and we're not Michigan. We're a different state. We do happen to have some of the finest academic institutions in the world. And I don't think it makes sense for us to try to duplicate that."²¹ Such words inflamed smoldering tensions. The interview infuriated the constituencies who identified themselves with public higher education. Many of them feared that the governor lacked sympathy for their cause and was not genuinely committed to providing educational leaders of superior quality. Besides leaving himself vulnerable to charges of favoritism, the governor inadvertently undercut the search. His comments went a long way to explaining his failure to play a more aggressive leadership role, particularly in the early stages of the search.

A short time later, a small group of Regents, which included Beaubien, Fox, Minor, and Ylvisaker, paid courtesy calls to both Speaker Keverian and Senate President Bulger. Among other things, they discussed the salary issue as a major problem facing them in the recruitment of a new chancellor. Keverian promised that he would not interfere with their efforts to seek corrective legislative action. While Bulger indicated that he did not favor a salary increase, he likewise promised not to put up any roadblocks.

The drafting of the necessary legislation soon got bogged down in an intramural spat between James Samels, the attorney for the Board of Regents, and Stephen Rosenfeld, the governor's legal counsel. Consequently, the pay raise bill (H-5474) was not filed until March 27. The governor's bill was designed to eliminate the practice of setting the chancellor's salary by statute. It delegated this prerogative to the Regents, subject to the approval of the commissioner of administration and finance, at that time Frank Keefe. Public hearing on the bill was held by the Public Service Committee on April 16. Since Ylvisaker was out of town that day, Beaubien and Minor testified at the hearing.

On May 6, the pay raise bill was reported favorably out of the Public Service Committee, but it now appeared in much different form. The new draft (H-5639) allowed the Regents to set the salary, but the first increase had to be approved by the Ways and Means committees of both houses. The legislative intent was to retain the "power of the purse" as a means of exerting leverage on the Board of Regents. H-5639 was then referred to the House Ways and Means Committee, where it languished and never resurfaced. The bill, which became an instrument of control for Speaker Keverian, succumbed to a slow and painful death.²²

The Nature of the Selection Process

The selection process was essentially a two-stage affair. The first stage, which extended from January 8 to June 19, involved establishing procedures, organizing the search, and

screening the applicants. The latter two functions were performed by the search committee. Procedures were set by the Board of Regents itself. The second stage was shorter but more intensive. It covered the twelve days between June 20 and July 1, when the Regents interviewed the four finalists and then finally picked the chancellor.

During the first stage, the search committee held fifteen meetings. These meetings were all duly announced as required by the state open meeting law. Formal minutes were recorded and made publicly available. Janet Eisner hosted most of the meetings at her campus. Those involving candidate interviews were held at MIT's Endicott House in Dedham and at the Park Plaza Hotel in Boston. Ylvisaker, who was designated as the sole spokesman for the search committee, reported about its progress at each meeting of the Board of Regents. He delegated the staff work to Hassan Minor, who was director of a nonprofit community organization headquartered at 315 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. Candidate files were kept sequestered there during the first stage. The committee originally contracted with the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) of American Colleges and Universities to conduct reference checks on semifinalist candidates. Because of a scheduling conflict, the AGB was later replaced by the firm Peter Levine Associates, which performed the same service.²³

Given the divergences between the rival factions, it could have been predicted that they would have difficulty working with each other. Ylvisaker may have foreseen that prospect; at least he came to see it right away. He showed a meticulous concern for maintaining a proper balance between politics and education. To the King appointees, Ylvisaker seemed more interested in process than in outcome. Unless he developed a fail-safe mechanism for protecting the process, he was afraid that it would be rigged or otherwise subverted. Ylvisaker's concern was heightened by the rumors of a "political fix." He soon found a way around the dilemma.

The Board of Regents meeting of February 11 was held at Roxbury Community College. Because of a winter snowstorm, six Regents were absent, including James Howell and Kathleen Harrington. At this meeting, Ylvisaker introduced a resolution that committed the Regents to make their appointment from a list of three to five candidates recommended by the search committee. If none of them proved acceptable, Ylvisaker's resolution further stipulated that the process was to be remanded back to the search committee, which would then provide additional recommendations. This provision was designed to guard against the repetition of the stalemate that had occurred in 1981. It was a masterful stroke that was deceptively simple. Since the resolution passed by a vote of 8 to 1, the Collins forces either were caught off guard or were slow on the uptake. Only Gerard Doherty opposed it.²⁴

More lay behind this maneuver than met the eye. The subtle message it conveyed to the Collins people was that they themselves were not operating in good faith and therefore could not be trusted. More significant were the realities that it moved power away from the Board of Regents and farmed out more of its autonomy. Gerard Doherty, who had missed the December 10 meeting when the Regents had approved the composition of the search committee, strongly objected to Ylvisaker's resolution on the grounds that it transferred his authority as a Regent to five non-Regents, who did not share his statutory responsibility or political accountability. In his view, the Ylvisaker maneuver was reminiscent of the "politics of exclusion" that had banned certain people from the 1968 Democratic national convention.²⁵

In that issue lay the misunderstanding. Ylvisaker, who privately referred to his scheme as "shark repellent," got his way in the adoption of the binding resolution but stored up

trouble for himself in its execution, thereby setting the stage for gubernatorial intervention. For the time being, calm nevertheless prevailed.

The search committee had established a set of procedural guidelines that were appended to Ylvisaker's resolution. They also rewrote the chancellor's job description, but not without some difficulty. Given the wide gaps in perspective, they found it hard to agree on the kind of person whom they wanted to fill the position. After extensive deliberation, they finally reached a consensus. Much emphasis was placed on the leadership and managerial skills required to run a comprehensive system with twenty-nine campuses. Another criterion called for "sensitivity to the educational needs of a changing population, and a record of commitment to affirmative action."²⁶ Although the job description mentioned that an "earned doctorate" was desired, the wording was ambiguous enough to allow for someone who lacked such a degree. In fact, the guidelines specifically allowed for "exceptional talent or accomplishment" as a qualification equivalency. They intentionally steered clear of making the Ph.D. the litmus test. It was preferred but not required.

The Massachusetts chancellor vacancy was advertised in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Black Issues in Higher Education*, and Boston and national newspapers, with March 15, 1986, set as the deadline for applications and nominations. In an effort to attract women and minorities, letters were sent to women's organizations and traditional black colleges encouraging them to apply. With these tasks completed, the wide net had been cast.

The next step was the screening of candidates. By the March 15 cutoff date, the committee had received 107 nominations, constituting a rich pool of both national and local candidates. A subcommittee composed of Ylvisaker, Knapp, and Minor did the initial screening. The first cuts were relatively easy. By March 31, they had reduced the pool from 107 to 32. Some 39 either withdrew or failed to complete their applications. Another 36 were eliminated for various reasons. Of the remaining 32 candidates, 6 were people of color, 16 were white, and race was indeterminable for the remainder. There were 6 women and 26 men.²⁷

Surviving the Next Two Cuts

On April 3, the search committee unanimously approved the work of its screening subcommittee. They spent the next two weeks examining candidate files. On April 17, Bruce Rose, the Regents' affirmative action officer, gave the list of 32 names his official stamp of approval. He found its racial and gender composition to fall within the prescribed guidelines.²⁸ On the same day, the committee winnowed the field from 32 to 12. Those who survived this cut were Alice Chandler, James Collins, Robert Corrigan, Elbert Fretwell, Leon Ginsberg, Franklyn Jenifer, William Monat, Barbara Newell, John Olver, Lawrence Pettit, Donald Stewart, and Blenda Wilson. This first short list consisted of 3 women and 9 men, three of whom were black.

The first indication of trouble was the leaking of these names to the press. On learning of the leak, Ylvisaker became visibly angered by the breach in confidentiality. The main casualty was Blenda Wilson, a black female educator who headed Colorado's Commission on Higher Education. She immediately dropped out of the competition to protect her quest for the presidency of Spelman College in Georgia. This post was being vacated by Donald Stewart, whom she did not want to offend. Up to that point, Wilson, along with Barbara Newell, were Ylvisaker's favorite contenders. Wilson had previously worked for

him as an assistant dean at Harvard. It was generally conceded that someone in the Collins camp was responsible for the news leak.

To no one's surprise, two state legislators survived this cut. Most participants felt that Collins and Olver were being paired to offset each other. The Ylvisaker group clung to a stereotype of Collins as a "hack politician" who they believed was only marginally qualified. His critics considered him an opportunist. They deplored the fact that he lacked a doctorate degree and that he did not come from a traditional academic background. Adding insult to injury, they admitted that Collins had been absorbed in elementary and secondary education, but they argued that he was a "Johnny-come-lately" with regard to higher education. Another complaint of his chief detractors was that Collins had never managed a large-scale public organization. The only job that the legislator held prior to entering politics was assistant director of an Upward Bound program at UMass/Amherst. For that matter, state Senator John Olver suffered from the same deficiency. He too had not managed a large public organization. Perhaps that was inevitable. It speaks to the legislative careers and the overlapping interests that the two prominent men shared. Both chaired legislative committees, both were politically qualified, and both came from Amherst.

The Collins advocates rebutted their opponents by arguing that their candidate more than met the "qualification equivalency" as specified in the accepted procedural guidelines through his legislative accomplishments. They were quick to point out that even the president of Harvard University only had a law degree and not an earned doctorate. They saw an attack on Collins as an attack on legislators in general. Senate President William Bulger stayed out of the chancellor search controversy largely in deference to state Senator John Olver. Although Bulger liked Collins personally, he did not want to embarrass his colleague Olver by going against him publicly. It was a form of senatorial courtesy on Bulger's part.

While this furor continued within the Board of Regents, House Speaker Keverian made threatening gestures of blocking the chancellor's pay raise bill unless Collins appeared among the finalists. That pressure grew in intensity as the "ownership mentality" of the General Court asserted itself. In legislative circles, Keverian's support of Collins was seen as a symbolic act intended to show that the Speaker was not vindictive toward his previous opponents in the 1984 House fight as long as they accepted his leadership.

Further complications arose when selection of the chancellor was attempted across sex lines. Gender and race were affirmative action criteria that had to be taken into account. The same was true of other factors such as social class, age, and ethnicity. Any combination of these variables made the search committee's choices that much more difficult. Inherited memories of the past gave certain options added weight and at the same time tended to exclude others.

In early May, as the emerging controversy surfaced publicly, the search committee began its first round of interviews. Professor Robert Lee from Fitchburg State College prepared a list of questions that solicited pertinent information about each candidate's track record and about his or her commitment to salient issues in public higher education. Due to scheduling problems, these interviews progressed slowly. Ylvisaker notified the Board of Regents that the search committee would not be able to present its final slate of candidates by the Board's June 9 meeting as originally planned. He also informed Beau-bien that the search was becoming politicized. The Collins entourage was especially active in May. Judge Fox lobbied hard to line up the necessary votes for his protégé. The

tactics of the Collins forces appeared heavy-handed to those who were not enamored of Collins.

Beaubien, who readily admitted that his business interests were interfering with his job as chairman of the Board of Regents, was content to play a passive role. He studiously refrained from taking sides. Compared with the forceful leadership exercised by James R. Martin, the Board's first chairman, Beaubien seemed weak and inept. He did not have the organizational skills to prevent the drift that the agency was experiencing. Without a firm hand at the helm, coupled with the custodial chancellorship of Joseph Finnegan, the Board of Regents was left operating with a loose rudder.

On May 22, the penultimate cut from twelve candidates to six was made. By this time, three of the contenders had dropped out. They included Blenda Wilson of Colorado, Alice Chandler of SUNY at New Paltz, and William Monat, chancellor of the Illinois Board of Regents, who accepted a job elsewhere. That left nine remaining. Of these, Robert Corrigan of UMass/Boston, Leon Ginsberg of West Virginia, and Lawrence Pettit of the University System of South Texas were eliminated. Corrigan was seen by the Collins backers as a threat to both Boston University and the resurgence of UMass/Amherst. They thought it was inappropriate for him to move ahead of his boss, David Knapp. At the conclusion of the meeting to narrow the field, the committee sensed a move afoot by Ylvisaker and Minor to limit the number of finalists to four.²⁹

Selection of the Final Four

As the search entered its final stages in June, the Collins phalanx became alarmed, and with good reason. Since their native son candidate had barely edged out Leon Ginsberg for the sixth spot, they feared that he might be eliminated in the final cut. To avoid such a consequence, they now attempted to do what they had flirted with back in December. At the Board of Regents meeting of June 9, which met in executive session, the Collins backers moved to dispense with the search and thereby clear the way to put their man in office. Ylvisaker firmly resisted this move and warned that if the search were disrupted he would be forced to go public. His counterthreat worked. The Collins faction backed off and withdrew their motion. As a compromise, the Board of Regents took the easy way out and authorized the submission of six names as finalists. And indeed, for a time it appeared that the search committee would take this way out.³⁰

For a meeting that was called for the purpose of reducing internal strife, it did not succeed. Strong differences of opinion split the Board of Regents. At one point, Janet Eisner walked out of the meeting in complete disgust, but Elizabeth Rawlins talked her into coming back. Eisner deplored the fact that the Board had spent five hours discussing the search, compared with one hour discussing the crisis at Westfield State College. Only fragmentary accounts of their confidential discussions leaked out, some of them a year later. The discordant factions now went their separate ways as the donnybrook headed for its first major showdown.

Three days later, on June 12, Eisner notified her fellow Regents that since she would be leaving the country for the next few weeks she would not be participating in their upcoming decisions. This announcement came as a big blow to the Collins camp, which had been counting heavily on her vote. Some thought that she "took a walk" to avoid trustee pressure on her campus. Emmanuel is a Catholic women's college that was founded by the Irish in 1919. As might be expected, many of its alumnae favored Collins. How much

pressure they actually applied to their trustees and president cannot be ascertained. Eisner herself unequivocally denied such allegations, claiming that she had scheduled her trip months in advance. For her, the Collins candidacy presented a quality issue. She definitely preferred E. K. Fretwell, who she felt would bring stature to the commonwealth.³¹

Maneuvers on both sides heightened the impression of a political fix. Distracting bombshells, like the Westfield State scandal and the conflict-of-interest charges leveled against Regent James Howell, exploded in their midst. The mudslinging continued unabated. Collins was severely criticized for his opposition to the creation of the Board of Regents and his subsequent attempts to repeal the enabling legislation. It seemed absurd and ludicrous to his detractors that he would now be chosen to head the agency that he had previously tried to dismantle. In a similar vein, John Olver was taken to task for his stance in favor of abolishing the president's office at UMass. The pro-Collins Regents complained bitterly that the non-Regents were usurping their prerogative to select the chancellor. Failure by chairman Beaubien to clarify this confusion in roles not only exacerbated the process issue but also led to a temporary breakdown in accountability.

On June 12 and 18, the six semifinalists were invited back for a second interview with nonsearch Regents in attendance. Complete reference checks were made on each candidate. At the beginning of the search, Collins had asked several well-known educators to nominate and endorse him. Gregory Anrig, the president of Educational Testing Service and former state secretary for education, nominated him for the chancellorship. Collins also obtained recommendations from the renowned historian Henry Steele Commager and from Peter Pouncey, the president of Amherst College. In addition to these, he received endorsements from a legislative delegation composed of UMass alumni and from the Massachusetts Black Legislative Caucus.³² The latter endorsement was considered to be a real coup for affirmative action. But the outside consulting firm (AGB) downplayed the impact of these endorsements. The consultants indicated that such letters of recommendation were unreliable because their authors could be sued in a court of law if they wrote comments that might be construed as damaging.

What particularly irked the Collins camp is that the nonsearch Regents were not allowed to see these letters or to attend the meetings of the search committee. As staff director, Hassan Minor kept the letters under tight security in his private office. This procedure distorted the process by giving the anti-Collins group an unfair advantage. As James Howell put it: "He who controls the mail has the power."³³ The Collins faction was peeved at Minor for other reasons. They felt that he had his own agenda, which was to get Franklyn Jenifer elected chancellor. Minor's close friendship with journalist Steve Curwood of the *Boston Globe* also disturbed them. In their view, it was no accident that Curwood's articles were highly critical of Collins and his supporters. Both sides were guilty of leaking information to the press. But not all of the leaks were detectable, at least not immediately. In 1987, a year later, the *Boston Globe* revealed that John Sasso, the governor's top aide, had leaked damaging information about Collins's academic record in law school.³⁴

Amid the swirl of conflicting information, UMass president David Knapp played a crucial role in promoting Collins. He was largely responsible for getting him into the semifinal round. Knapp warned his cohorts that there would be a major uproar if they excluded Collins.³⁵ Some saw Knapp acting in his own self-interest in not wanting a strong chancellor who might well overshadow him. Others believed that if Collins became chancellor, he would have to depend on Knapp for advice and counsel. Still others felt that Knapp was under heavy pressure from both the UMass Alumni Association and the public

college presidents' group to fall in line behind Collins. Knapp's motives may have been mixed but surely were more complex than his critics would acknowledge.

During the second round of interviews, Donald Stewart, the president of Spelman College in Georgia, impressed everyone, but he suffered from the same drawback as Olver and Collins in not having managed a large public organization. Barbara Newell came across as an upper-middle-class professional woman who knew Massachusetts from her earlier days as president of Wellesley College. Since then, she had been chancellor of the Board of Regents in Florida, where she ran into difficulty with its state legislature. In 1986, she was a visiting scholar at Harvard, and over the years she had been friendly with Ylvisaker. The Collins faction found Newell not only aloof but also unsympathetic to their concerns. Franklyn Jenifer, who felt that a few questions in his first interview were "flagrantly racist," fared somewhat better in his second interview.³⁶ He was able to use his central office experience in New Jersey to advantage. The chancellor position was a career advancement for him, since he would be moving up from a deputy position to the top spot. E. K. Fretwell, who had done his graduate work at Harvard, came right out of central casting. He was an orthodox candidate typically revered in the halls of academe. In this sense, he had a perfect résumé. At sixty-two years of age, the chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte had spent a lifetime in education and had gained a stellar reputation nationally. Fretwell, however, was seen as nearing retirement. Nevertheless, the age factor did not seem to harm his chances. He was on everybody's short list.³⁷

Salary remained the big stumbling block. Paradoxically, Massachusetts had one of the largest systems with one of the lowest salaries. Speaker Keverian was now holding the pay raise bill hostage as a means of promoting Collins. Of the six semifinalists, only Olver and Collins were willing to accept the job at the current salary of \$65,000. There was also a housing allowance of \$18,000. This combined figure paled by comparison to the \$178,000 that California paid the head of its system. The other four candidates felt the total compensation package was too low, though Newell and Jenifer were willing to negotiate. Fretwell and Stewart were not. Stewart was astounded to learn that the Massachusetts chancellor earned less than some of the public college presidents within the same system. Frustrated in their attempts to change the law, the Regents were powerless to rectify the situation. Keverian's tactics had stymied the search committee. Caught in a classic catch-22, Ylvisaker found himself with little room to maneuver. His antagonists gave him no end of trouble.

The final meeting of the search committee was held at the Park Plaza Hotel in Boston on June 19. Before commencing, they waited over an hour for the arrival of the student member, Eileen Parise, who was stuck in a traffic jam on the Southeast Expressway. As a result of the absence of Janet Eisner, Parise's vote became that much more crucial. Both sides insisted on waiting. Still young and inexperienced, Parise was pliable.

Intent on circumventing the Regents' June 9 directive, Hassan Minor presented a three-step process. One was to reject the Regents' directive that authorized six candidates. A second was to submit only four names. The third was to select the four people and submit them in unranked order. All three steps were discussed at length and approved. The results of the tally on the third option put Fretwell on top with a maximum of ten votes, followed by Olver with nine, Jenifer with eight, and Newell with six. Eliminated from the short list were Collins with four votes and Stewart with three.³⁸

The Collins group reacted in shock to the outcome. They were particularly disappointed in Eileen Parise. She was the one vote they had miscalculated. Mary Lou Anderson, who was pushing Barbara Newell, felt that the Collins people had exhibited "sexist"

behavior in their questioning of Newell. Anderson was accused by them of exerting undue influence on Parise in persuading her not to vote for Collins. Both Anderson and Parise denied that any sort of arm-twisting had taken place.³⁹ But the Collins backers claimed to have overheard conversations to the contrary. In any case, they were furious. Suspecting that Ylvisaker had engineered the outcome, they accused him of having rigged the process to prevent Collins from making the list of four finalists. There was an element of truth in their accusations when one considers that Ylvisaker's own binding resolution allowed for a maximum of five candidates. Whatever the grievance, Edward Sullivan stormed out of the meeting taking a binder of confidential material that was supposed to remain sequestered. The hostility of Sullivan toward Ylvisaker and Minor became especially caustic.

Shortly afterward, Collins had an unexpected meeting with former state representative Mel King. Collins told the black leader that he was disappointed in King's wife, Joyce, who did not vote for him. She favored Jenifer and Stewart, whom she saw as risk takers. In her view, Collins did not meet the quality standard. Because of her involvement in her husband's Boston mayoral campaign, which witnessed the emergence of the "rain-bow coalition," the Roxbury Community College trustee had missed several search committee meetings.⁴⁰

Collins Appointed and Ylvisaker Resigns

Through the remainder of June, the political pressures and maneuvering intensified. The sense of urgency in the Collins camp bordered on frenzy. Panic seized the members as they realized that the terms of three Regents (Eisner, Howell, and Paresky) were about to expire. They were afraid of losing their numerical advantage on the Board. So they pressed for a final decision by July 1. As David Knapp had warned, the major uproar now erupted. Still smarting from their defeat on June 19, the Collins aggregation not only got mad, but, in the Irish vernacular, they also got even.

While this fighting was going on, Ylvisaker convinced Dukakis that he was getting battered by his adversaries. They clobbered him by belaboring the point that his committee had come up with only one viable candidate, John Olver, who would accept the job at the prescribed salary. The governor was reluctant to intervene. He did not want to pull a power play. In the words of one critic, "Dukakis does not thrive in such circumstances, because he is above all a consensus politician uncomfortable with open conflict."⁴¹ The governor admitted that he did not have the votes to prevent Collins from being elected chancellor. He therefore asked Ylvisaker to play the "heavy" until he could appoint new members to the Board of Regents. By that time, however, Ylvisaker was perceived by the opposition as a "tool of the Duke." This perception was based in part on a personal affinity that had evolved between the two men beginning in the mid-1950s, when Dukakis was a student of Ylvisaker at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, and continuing when their paths crossed again at Harvard in the late 1970s.

At the Board's special meeting of July 1, in which the full panoply of tensions erupted, chairman Beaubien had one purpose in mind: to elect a chancellor. After Ylvisaker gave a brief summary of the search, the first ballot was taken. Jenifer obtained five votes, Olver one, and Fretwell one. Strangely, Newell received none. At the time, both Newell and Fretwell were traveling as part of an exchange program in China, and most Regents read their absence as a sign that they were no longer interested in the position. The Collins faction showed its strategy by registering eight abstentions. Then came the second ballot. There were six votes for Jenifer, three for Olver, and six abstentions. The third ballot

produced the identical result. Thus, the stalemate that Ylvisaker had anticipated did in fact occur.

At this juncture, the process should have reverted to the search committee, but it did not, and that is precisely where the fatal flaw came into play. In a series of parliamentary maneuvers designed to scuttle the search, George Ellison moved to discharge the search committee, to rescind the resolution of February 11, and to take nominations from the floor. All three motions passed and thereby cleared the way for Collins to reenter the picture. This pressure caused Beaubien to cave in. Then came the final ballot.

When the votes were counted, Collins received eight, Jenifer three, and Olver three. David Paresky of Weston abstained. As a fellow UMass/Amherst alumnus, Beaubien cast the decisive vote for Collins. It was shades of Winthrop Dakin. Norma Markey, the student Regent who attended North Shore Community College, also voted for Collins.⁴²

Ylvisaker was outraged. The implications for the commonwealth seemed alarming to him. He believed that the integrity of the process had been grossly violated. He resigned that same day, charging that the selection of Collins had been “politically wired” and that it amounted to “politics as usual.”⁴³ Soon after, Eisner, who had returned from abroad, tendered her resignation. She wrote a letter to the governor that reinforced Ylvisaker’s argument.⁴⁴ As a matter of principle, Ylvisaker rejected the governor’s offer to place him back on the Board of Regents.

Gubernatorial Intervention

As much as any politician in the country, Dukakis, who had regained the governorship with an exciting comeback victory in 1982, understood the essence of the political game. His battle in 1983 to remove a “midnight” appointee of outgoing Governor King as director of the Massachusetts Port Authority was a perfect illustration. Some people saw a close parallel in the chancellor case. Initially, Dukakis took a cautious wait-and-see attitude. He was not particularly worried about Collins because he believed that Ylvisaker would come up with a host of first-rate candidates who would eclipse him. He saw Collins as a political candidate rather than a substantive one.

On another front, the governor never delivered on his promise to obtain legislation boosting the chancellor’s salary. Publicly, he favored the pay increase, but privately he complained to Beaubien that he did not earn the kind of money that they had in mind. Dukakis, who carried the liabilities as well as the assets of a long political career, was unable to deliver because of his rift with Keverian. This broken promise hurt him with his own Regent appointees.

But the political intrigue was more complicated. Gerard Indelicato, the governor’s special assistant on education, did not apprise his boss of what was happening. Nor did he inform the Regents of how Dukakis might react if Collins were elected. This failure of communication caused surprise on both sides. Since Indelicato aspired to become president of Bridgewater State College, he was apparently operating in his own self-interest. He told the Collins forces that the governor had no problem with their candidate. Therefore, Kathleen Harrington of Fall River, a Dukakis appointee, felt free to support Collins. By all accounts, Indelicato took advantage of the political bargaining that was going on and parlayed it to get the Bridgewater presidency. His actions wreaked havoc and caused major misunderstandings among all parties at interest. According to Lashman, Indelicato did a double disservice to the governor not only by withholding information from him but also by not protecting his relationship with Speaker Keverian.⁴⁵

When Harrington talked with the governor's aides on June 30, she learned that Dukakis still did not have his own candidate. Furthermore, she was told that if the choice boiled down to Olver and Jenifer, he would go with Olver.⁴⁶ Actually, the governor would have accepted Olver, but the state senator was not his first choice. He leaned more toward Fretwell. Dukakis had talked with former governor James Martin of North Carolina, who spoke highly of Fretwell.⁴⁷ No one can know for sure what might have resulted had Dukakis gone with Olver. In hindsight, however, almost everyone in his administration believed his final acceptance of Jenifer to have been wiser and more fruitful.

The political significance of that acceptance transcended the immediate issue. Like most politicians who move into the front ranks, the governor realized that the political system within which he had to operate was not only shaping his decisions but also formulating his options. Standing for reelection in the fall, he could ill afford to do nothing, especially with the persistent embarrassment caused by the Westfield State sex scandal. Some thought that this episode was the catalyst that spurred him to action. Facing criticism for his indecision, Dukakis decided that the political imperative of defeating Collins outweighed the moral one of cleaning up the mess at Westfield. As his top aide, John Sasso, put it, "This is about winning."

Echoing similar sentiments was David Nyhan of the *Boston Globe*, who declared, "Governors running for reelection, and maybe for president, cannot afford to get their tail so publicly kicked on something as visible as Collins and his legislative backers made this."⁴⁸ The *Globe*, which had begun as a neutral observer, now found itself as an active participant attempting to influence the outcome with its blistering editorials and its investigative journalism. Except for television station WGBH, the weekly newspaper *Boston Phoenix*, and the communications media in western Massachusetts, which sided with Collins, press coverage tended to be biased in favor of Dukakis. This was especially true of the *Globe*, whose editorial writers and political cartoonists had a field day in attacking the Collins forces. The major metropolitan daily, which was the newspaper of record, did not want to detract from the presidential aspirations of Dukakis.

The key to leadership is seizing the initiative. With this in mind, the governor intervened in the dispute on July 2. Angered by the unfolding events, he chastised the Board of Regents for what it had done, replaced its chairman, David Beaubien, with Edward Lashman, and announced his intention to have its election of Collins overturned. Part of his anger was due to the violation of process and part of it stemmed from his being taken by surprise. He wanted to challenge the election of Collins in court, but Lashman talked him out of doing so, because Lashman felt that it was clear from reading the statute that Collins had been elected legally. Whenever Dukakis spoke, he emphasized his personal commitment to restoring public confidence in a badly shaken system. Wrapped up in those claims were implicit values of competence, integrity, and good government.⁴⁹

It was vintage Dukakis. In his second term he had received a great deal more from the legislature than he did during his first term. Few governors had done better. But he had to pay a heavy price for his intervention. It put him on a collision course with the legislature in general and with the Speaker in particular. After all, Keverian had helped him produce many striking public policy changes in his second term. Their relationship was now seriously ruptured, if not irreparably harmed. The Speaker had been deeply hurt by being tarred in the media as a "shabby" Massachusetts politician. The improper fundraising charges that were leveled against Duff, followed by an investigation ordered by the governor, were the precipitating events that now made it difficult for Dukakis and Keverian to work out an accommodation. John Sasso was furious at Indelicato for not protecting the

relationship between the governor and the Speaker. Furthermore, Keverian was sensitive to the unfavorable comments about presumed “patronage.”

Stung by the rejection of one of their own, legislators in both political parties rallied behind Collins. They bitterly resented his being labeled as a “hack politician.” Many of them, including the new House education chairman Nicholas Paleologos, took the insult personally. They felt it demeaned the entire legislature. To show their support, the Democrat-controlled House unanimously passed a resolution endorsing Collins as chancellor. There were no dissenting voices. Even the Republicans joined in the heavenly chorus.

What surprised most political pundits is that Collins had been a longtime supporter of Dukakis. He had remained loyal to him even after Dukakis had lost his primary battle against Edward King in 1978, when most mainstream Irish Democratic politicians threw their support behind King. The same was true in the much-publicized rematch of 1982. Two years later, Dukakis had a serious falling out with Collins over their disagreement about education reform efforts in 1984 and 1985. In 1984, Collins insisted on pushing a costly bill mandating large increases in teacher salaries, despite the governor’s concern that the bill would necessitate a tax increase. This put the governor in the awkward position of failing to support a House leadership bill that had the strong backing of the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

Convinced that his party leader was “hoodwinking” the public, Collins broke with the governor over this issue. His criticism of the Dukakis administration was shrill and persistent. Such strident rhetoric planted the seeds of discord. From then on, the governor no longer considered Collins to be a “team player.”⁵⁰ Reporter Scot Lehigh, writing for the *Boston Phoenix*, correctly attributed this break in relations to their current difficulties: “Clearly, from the viewpoint of a governor with no real higher-education goals, agenda, or philosophy — outside of a desire not to be embarrassed — Collins’s tendency to be blunt, uncompromising, and outspoken made him an uncomfortable choice for chancellor.”⁵¹

On July 3, Dukakis telephoned Collins to see if they could resolve their differences. The chief executive advised Collins not to resign his House seat and to stop holding press conferences. He also warned Collins not to go down the path on which he was headed because he was the only person who would get hurt. Spurning this advice, Collins promptly resigned from the legislature and decided to stay the course. Forewarned, he figured, was forearmed. But the crisis had not been resolved — only postponed.

Three days later, on July 6, reporter Bruce Mohl of the *Boston Globe* broke the story that identified Collins as the person who had asked former chancellor Duff to peddle the tickets for Keverian’s fundraiser. Collins frankly acknowledged the truth of the story but claimed that the tickets were intended for Duff’s personal use. Contacted by the same reporter, Duff, who had taken a job as commissioner of the Chicago Public Library, denied such intent.⁵²

On July 10, Collins went public with his fight by making a brief appearance on television. Citing relevant statistics, he deplored the fact that one out of four public school students in Massachusetts dropped out of education. He pointed out that only 18 percent of the graduates of Chelsea High School advanced to college while over 85 percent of those in Amherst did. By skillfully publicizing the issue, Collins hoped to overcome his perceived liabilities and to win grass-roots support as Horace Mann had done in the late 1830s. Wrapping himself in the mantle of the legendary Mann, who had faced a similar crisis, the ex-Amherst legislator made his case. In so doing, he continued to stress elementary and secondary education, thereby lending credence to those who attacked him

for not having a grasp of the issues facing higher education. But the television broadcast, which was paid for by the UMass Alumni Association, did not generate the groundswell of favorable public opinion that he had anticipated.⁵³ Even worse, it infuriated the governor, who felt that Collins had gone too far. The conflict was now reduced to strictly political hardball.

As the governor's hand-picked troubleshooter, Edward Lashman played his role to perfection. The new Board of Regents chairman was superb at delay. In a flurry of hastily arranged meetings held at the Harvard Club in downtown Boston, he negotiated with Collins and offered him a short-term contract, no longer than ninety days. This offer was promptly rejected. Collins insisted on a one-year performance contract, but he did not get it. His requests to continue negotiations were refused. At this point, Michael West, an attorney for Collins, threatened to file an unfair labor practice suit against Lashman, who he contended was not bargaining in good faith. Pressure was also put on him to the effect that if he did not cooperate, the presidential plans of Dukakis would be sabotaged. Undaunted, Lashman remained steadfast. He indicated that he was going to Maine on vacation for the last two weeks of July. By leaving the state, Lashman bought the governor the time he needed to reshape the Board of Regents with his new appointees.

Frustrated by Lashman's delay tactics, the Collins group on July 18 attempted to call a special meeting of the Board of Regents to award their man a long-term contract. Lashman denied their request. An embittered Edward Sullivan broke with his cohorts on this issue. He wanted to hold the meeting without Lashman and let Lashman take them to court. But cooler heads prevailed. The Collins people did not go the litigation route themselves, because it was doubtful if they could have obtained injunctive relief. To do so they would have had to prevail on the merits and to prove instant damage. So they dropped the idea of a legal challenge. To save face, they sent Harrington as an emissary to John Sasso to find out if they could reach a compromise. She never heard back from him. It would be hardball to the end.⁵⁴

Frantic to stave off the removal of Collins, on July 24 seven of his supporters asked Attorney General Francis X. Bellotti to rule on the legality of the matter. Responding the very next day, Bellotti gave them both good news and bad news. The good news was that Collins had been legally elected chancellor on July 1. The bad news was that the chancellor serves at the pleasure of the Board of Regents and is "subject to removal by the board with no legal entitlement to serve out any contractually specified term."⁵⁵ On this prophetic note, the fate of Collins was sealed for all practical purposes. Although his days were numbered, the outcome was by no means a foregone conclusion.

Almost simultaneously, television station WBZ in Boston announced the results of a public opinion poll that it had commissioned. When asked if Collins should receive a contract, 27 percent of those polled responded affirmatively; when asked if the search should be reopened, 39 percent agreed; and 33 percent said they didn't know. When asked whether Dukakis's actions were politically motivated or whether he was acting to preserve the legitimacy of the search process, 33 percent responded affirmatively to the first question; 27 percent agreed with the second; and 39 percent fell into the "don't know" category.⁵⁶

Collins Removed and Jenifer Appointed

Through July and August the pressure did not subside. Collins, who had dug in his heels, visited the Westfield State campus in an effort to stabilize the unrest there. He also asked the state Ethics Commission if it would be proper for him to hire his former legislative

aide, who was a nephew of Regent John Fox. To top it off, Collins announced plans for the establishment of a public-private partnership for the purpose of helping disadvantaged youth go on to college. These moves were more symbolic than substantive. Most knowledgeable observers interpreted his actions as a concerted public relations effort to rescue an embattled chancellorship.

On July 31, Dukakis appointed three new Regents. He chose Ellen Guiney, director of Boston's citywide educational coalition; Paul Doherty, a Springfield attorney; and Joe Henson, president of Prime Computer. These appointments made political sense, but the academic community was not impressed. While the governor did not exact a pledge from his appointees to vote against Collins, he did ask them for a commitment to vote on procedural matters and to reopen the search. Speaker Keverian accused the governor of "packing the board" to ensure that Collins would be removed. With the three new members aboard, Lashman now granted the Collins faction its request for a special meeting. It was held on August 5. By identical votes of 9 to 7, the Board of Regents reinstituted the search and denied Collins the one-year performance contract that he was seeking.⁵⁷ The balance of power had clearly shifted in the governor's favor.

Because they already had a list of credible candidates, the Board of Regents agreed informally not to expand the reopened search. Instead of starting from scratch, they merely picked up where they had left off in late June. This time, however, only the Regents participated, thus restoring their lost autonomy. Lashman had a difficult task in persuading the former finalists to return to the race. He did not try to convince Barbara Newell, who dropped out of contention on August 18 because she felt that the environment had become too politicized. To avoid the potential embarrassment of a candidate's refusing to accept the position because of the low salary, Lashman insisted that all the candidates give him a commitment in writing that they would accept the job if offered it. Since Collins was still legally the chancellor, he presented a special problem. Nevertheless, Lashman insisted that he declare his intentions in writing if he wished to be considered. Collins grudgingly complied with the request.

At about the same time, the press announced that Donald Stewart had been hired as president of the College Board in New York City. This prompted the *Boston Globe* to criticize the Dukakis administration for allowing Stewart to slip through its net.⁵⁸ Ironically, Gregory Anrig, who had nominated Collins, was the head of the parent organization that hired Stewart. Anrig was effusive in his praise of Stewart. The ultimate irony, of course, was that Franklyn Jenifer happened to be a prominent Catholic layman. But neither the Catholic community nor the black community rallied to his support.⁵⁹

During the month of August, the Regents interviewed the four candidates once again. It was clear to them that if either Collins or Olver were chosen, the system would become captive of the legislature. If Fretwell were picked, they would be getting a custodial chancellor who was approaching the end of his career. Fretwell's performance in this interview was disappointing. By contrast, Jenifer was most impressive. He offered something different both in style and in substance. The former high school dropout and Rutgers biology professor made it clear that his loyalty would be primarily to the people of the commonwealth rather than to the General Court. He came across as a mover, shaker, and policymaker who intended to stir things up and to plan on a systemwide basis.

But the fight was not over yet. A campaign appears to have been undertaken to discredit Jenifer and to scare him off. A number of New Jersey Democrats, including members of the state legislature, advised Jenifer to drop out of the race. He was also informed that he would never get a pay raise if he accepted the Massachusetts post. Even worse, rumors

were spread that Jenifer had been involved in a sexual harassment case in New Jersey. On learning of this gossip, Lashman launched an immediate investigation by the Massachusetts state police. Playing it safe, he also had Jenifer checked out independently by a private detective agency. The results of both investigations cleared Jenifer completely of the attempted character assassination.⁶⁰

In the meantime, the governor met with both Fretwell and Jenifer at Lashman's home. After talking with them, Dukakis still entertained a preference for Fretwell. In the governor's mind, Fretwell was the safer candidate because he was better known and he fit all the parameters. Dukakis remained unconvinced about Jenifer's suitability. Quite apart from the smear campaign that was rearing its ugly head, the governor had some reservations about him. As September approached, support for Jenifer coalesced. Henson flew to New Jersey to check him out, while Nicholas Boraski spoke with his contacts there at General Electric. In the end, Jenifer was Lashman's candidate.

The stage was set for yet another showdown. Appointment and removal were the two items on the agenda at the Regents' September 9 meeting. Knowing that the Collins cause was futile, Sullivan did not even bother to show up for this meeting. Without much fanfare, the Board of Regents elected Franklyn Jenifer as its new chancellor. He obtained 9 votes to Collins's 6. Strange as it may seem, Collins insisted on being fired. He wanted to force the Regents to dismiss him face to face. Complying with his wishes, the Regents terminated him as chancellor effective September 12. This ended the protracted and hard-fought battle that left its weary combatants either traumatized or elated.⁶¹

Lessons Learned

Looking back over these events and analyzing their implications, one has to ask why this case history is important. In more ways than one, the search for a Massachusetts chancellor illuminates the course not to take. There can be little doubt that the initial outcome had been the result of faulty decisions or decision-making processes. Putting aside the clash of personalities, which cannot be minimized, the major difficulties were systemic as well as procedural. More to the point, the political domain has an ownership stake in the Board of Regents, and that in itself flaws the process. Appointments to the Board of Regents are made primarily from the private sector. This is a structural problem that has since been rectified to some extent with the clarification in the state ethics law. Private college officials should not be in the business of regulating their public sector counterparts. In addition to the glaring conflict of interest involved, it also contravenes the Board of Regents' oversight function with regard to private institutions.

By allowing five outsiders to participate in their search, the Regents unwittingly gave up a certain degree of autonomy at the outset. Ostensibly, this action was taken to make the process more democratic, but it resulted in making the Board of Regents susceptible to political manipulation that it could not withstand in its bureaucratic infancy. Autonomy is especially fragile during this nurturing stage. To compound the difficulty, the Ylvisaker resolution gave away more of this perishable commodity. In the future, the Regents will have to proceed more cautiously before dispensing with any of their autonomy.

This issue naturally leads to the question of predetermination. To what extent was the candidacy of James Collins doomed at the beginning, given the widespread perception that the "fix was in"? Answers to this question remain uncertain and partisan. Nonetheless, considering the climate that existed in Massachusetts in 1986, the Collins candidacy seemed almost destined to fail. Public opinion polls reflected the strains of the dispute.

Collins probably suffered more from being stereotyped a “hack politician” than he did from not having the right academic credentials. Embedded in that shopworn stereotype lay a virulent antilegislativ bias. At the time, the General Court was not held in high esteem by the citizenry. But this bias provides only a partial explanation. The Hampshire County Democrat personified at once the Irish establishment, the publics versus the privates, the rebirth of UMass/Amherst, and the cultural values of rural, small-town western Massachusetts, where he was perceived as a popular folk hero who was standing up to the pressure of the powerful elites in Boston. The urban-rural rivalries, in their subtle variations, worked to Collins’s detriment.⁶²

It is also revealing to note that the triumvirate of Ylvisaker, Lashman, and Dukakis all came from Harvard, an institution steeped in tradition and seen as the bastion of elitism. In terms of the new politics, they were a throwback to the old Yankees, who had fought and excluded the Irish in an earlier era. Both Doherty and Keverian were graduates of Harvard, but they had come from working-class origins. To be sure, their close bonds of friendship were cemented in the unfair class distinctions that they had experienced during their undergraduate days, when they had gotten to know each other at Dudley House, the center at Harvard for commuting students. The student “brown baggers” who rode the MBTA trolley cars to Cambridge were not accepted socially on the same terms as those privileged to live in Harvard Yard. These ethnic and class relationships, as well as those of gender and race, were manifested throughout the chancellor struggle.

Beneath the veneer, the role of the Irish as depicted in the media was overblown and overplayed. It should be noted that neither Keverian nor Fox is Irish. Ethnic loyalty was not as much a binding factor as legislative loyalty. In the words of Maurice Donahue, “The only time the Irish stand together is during the reading of the Gospel at church services.”⁶³ Personally, Collins felt that he had been the victim of elitism and academic snobbery. Like Dukakis, who had been jolted by his humiliating defeat in the gubernatorial race in 1978, Collins had learned the lessons of adversity and humility. But the taxi driver’s son suffered from more than hurt pride and a bruised ego. He also suffered to some degree from an anti-Irish bias. The blinders of ethnicity and negative stereotypes were definitely at play. As Martin Nolan of the *Boston Globe* told Collins afterward, “You didn’t have the right stickers on your back.”⁶⁴ To the Collins camp, Ylvisaker epitomized Harvard elitism with his insistence on a terminal doctoral degree. The fact that Harvard’s president lacked such a degree merely added fuel to the fire. Much of the internal acrimony and resentment on the Board of Regents was caused by Ylvisaker’s pushing his own friends in academia for the job. Cronyism as an issue cut both ways.

Obviously, the Collins faction misread the signs and overestimated their political strength. Their numerical superiority may have lulled them into a false sense of security. Essentially, they played a political insider’s game, but they met with a governor who refused to back down. Much to his credit, Collins declined to accept a “golden handshake” that came in the form of a job offer at his alma mater.

A case can be made that if there was a conspiracy to foist Collins into the chancellorship, there was likewise a counterconspiracy to deny it to him. The anti-Collins forces contended that the opposition used tactics that were pejoratively political. Although they differed on objectives, Ylvisaker and Minor resorted to much the same kind of devious tactics in their efforts to control the process. Ingenious people, working hard, can always think up ways of circumventing constraints on authority. This was likewise true of the governor, who in the view of several members of the search committee had conveyed the impression that he wanted anybody but Collins. That the chief executive aroused heated

opposition is not surprising, for he took on the established order and offended mainstream Irish Democrats. If the Collins phalanx wired the process for their man, the governor certainly rewired it for his choice. He allowed the change precisely because he now accepted what he had earlier rejected. Ambition for higher office often induces leading politicians to support options that will enhance their electoral appeal and strengthen their political alliances.

By his opting for Jenifer, or at least by his concurring with the Board of Regents' decision, Dukakis made a critical choice and adjusted his gubernatorial campaign strategy to conform with Massachusetts's changing electorate. His nimble skills as a consensus politician were severely tested. But smart politics is not the same as wise politics. The real bone of contention between the Dukakis reformers and the Irish regulars was political control.

Seen in this light, the Irish regulars took a bad rap because the governor and his followers played the identical political game. They too were not above reproach in their discrediting Collins and bashing Keverian. The latter amounted to sheer political folly. Moreover, no one on the governor's side was managing the crisis at the Board of Regents until Lashman took over the reins. The supporting evidence indicates that Indelicato's deceit was compounded by lackluster performances from a weak chairman and a stand-in chancellor. Even so, the buck stops with the chief executive. After all, John Sasso and Frank Keefe, along with John Duff, had warned Dukakis about Indelicato. Beyond that, his latest appointments to the Board of Regents also lacked luster.

This brings us, finally, to the question of whether the struggle was worth the price. On the positive side, it forced the governor to address the problems of public higher education; it dramatized the problem of the chancellor's salary; and it prevented the General Court from capturing the Board of Regents. On the negative side, the relationship of the Board of Regents to the other institutions within the system was damaged; and its struggle for autonomy lost. The agency's credibility was not only weakened, but the legitimacy of its governance was also undermined. Given the fragile bonds that hold the public academic enterprise together, the viability of the Board of Regents itself was called into question.⁶⁵ At a moment of truth, Beaubien, as a political innocent, capitulated in casting the decisive vote for Collins. With his capitulation at such a critical point, autonomy went down the drain. But even Ylvisaker lost in the end. Both he and Beaubien were defeated on the autonomy issue.

On balance, one can reasonably argue that a politicized search is far too high a price to pay for the good of the commonwealth. The world of public higher education is simply too fragile and too skittish to accept this sort of rift. The whole is bound to suffer from the unintended consequences. This case provides ample evidence to support such an argument. As John Millett concludes, "To avoid open political warfare, higher education boards have to find some way in which to engage in political dialogue with state government officials."⁶⁶ Otherwise the warring factions are certain to inflict damage. The answer lies in properly managing the dichotomy of tensions between legitimate political objectives and legitimate academic objectives. To ask for prudence is perhaps asking too much, but to expect that we can "keep politics out of education" is to perpetuate a myth that invites disappointment.

In the aftermath of the controversy, the Regents were finally given the power to set the salary of the chancellor. Surprisingly, it was Speaker Keverian who sponsored the corrective legislation in 1987. He did so not only to extend a peace offering to Franklyn Jenifer but, perhaps more important, to restore his own image and to prove his critics wrong.

This was no small accomplishment. It added to the positive consequences and made Keverian an unlikely hero. The struggle, in all its rich and poignant detail, had swung full cycle.

All of this seems clear in retrospect. Because of the incendiary political smoke screens, it may not have been so clear during the heat of battle. Yet the search for a new chancellor was exceedingly difficult and divisive in 1981, as it had been in the search for the chancellor of the former Board of Higher Education in 1967. From these events, along with the details already noted, it should not have been hard to infer that trouble loomed on the horizon in 1986. Every search has been harmed by a welter of recurring tensions. But these tensions, as we have seen, have their historical roots. They will not go away. Whether or not the actors can free themselves from their affinities for the remembered past and permit a fair and open search remains to be seen. One thing is certain. Massachusetts will still have to grapple with the problem of providing democratic accountability that does not threaten academic independence. Achieving this goal will enable the public institutions of higher learning to operate in a complex political system in which they can meet difficult challenges without bowing to inappropriate pressures. In the last analysis, the future of the public university ultimately depends on the confidence of its citizens. 🐼

NOTES

1. Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., "Autonomy in Academia: The State's Responsibility to Higher Education," Askwith Lecture, Harvard University, April 14, 1986.
2. For a perceptive analysis of such clashes see John D. Millett, *Conflict in Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984), p. 216.
3. Judith Block McLaughlin and David Riesman, "The Shady Side of Sunshine," *87 Teachers College Record* 471 (1986).
4. Judith Block McLaughlin, "Plugging Search Committee Leaks," *ACB Reports*, May/June 1985, pp. 24–30.
5. The author interviewed the eleven members of the chancellor search committee whose names appear in the text. He also interviewed Regents David Beaubien, Gerard Doherty, George Ellison, Kathleen Harrington, and Edward Lashman, along with former chancellor James Collins, former state Secretary of Educational Affairs Joseph M. Cronin, and the current chancellor, Franklyn Jenifer. Except where otherwise noted, most of the substantive material for this case study is derived from these interviews. For the record, it should be pointed out that Regent John Fox declined to be interviewed.
6. Robert Wood, "The Public-Private Forum," *3 New England Journal of Public Policy* 8 (1987).
7. Interview with Joseph Cronin, October 22, 1987. See also Joseph M. Cronin, "Higher Education Policy-Making in Massachusetts," a paper prepared for the Alden Seminars (April 1987), p. 6. For a detailed analysis of the weaknesses of the Board of Higher Education, see John A. Stevens, "A Process for Determining the Appropriate Role for the Massachusetts State College System" (unpublished qualifying paper, Harvard University, April 1980).
8. Millett, p. 104.
9. Cronin, p. 7.
10. Board of Regents, "The Massachusetts System of Public Higher Education" (mimeographed, 1985), pp. 1–13. See in particular Appendix B.
11. Interview with George Ellison, March 17, 1987.
12. Interviews with Kermit Morrissey, September 8, 1987, and Franklin Patterson, February 25, 1988.

13. Interview with David Beaubien, November 18, 1986.
14. Interview with Paul Ylvisaker, November 11, 1986.
15. Interview with Edward Sullivan, December 9, 1986.
16. Interviews with David Beaubien, November 18, 1986; Gerard Doherty, March 6, 1987; George Ellison, March 17, 1987; Kathleen Harrington, March 10, 1987; James Howell, February 2, 1987; David Knapp, November 26, 1986; Robert Lee, January 16, 1987; and Edward Sullivan, December 9, 1986.
17. Interviews with Mary Lou Anderson, November 25, 1986; Laura Clausen, December 11, 1986; Joyce King, January 27, 1987; Hassan Minor, November 20, 1986; Eileen Parise, December 4, 1986; and Paul Ylvisaker, November 11, 1986.
18. Interview with Hassan Minor, November 20, 1986.
19. Interview with Edward Lashman, May 12, 1988. A native of New Orleans, Lashman attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Tulane University, but he never received a degree.
20. Interview with James Howell, February 2, 1987.
21. *Boston Globe*, January 9, 1986.
22. Legislative history of H-5474 and H-5639 is taken from the computer printouts regarding these bills. Speaker George Keeverian explained his views on the chancellor search controversy at a public policy seminar, which he conducted in the legislative chamber on November 12, 1986 (videocassette). This seminar was sponsored by the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs at UMass/Boston.
23. Letter from Paul Ylvisaker to David Beaubien, June 30, 1986.
24. Minutes of the Board of Regents meeting of February 11, 1986.
25. Interview with Gerard Doherty, March 6, 1987. See also Gerard Doherty, "The Case for Collins," *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1986.
26. Job description of the Massachusetts chancellorship as it appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 29 and February 5, 1986.
27. Board of Regents, "Preliminary Review of Candidates" (mimeographed, April 17, 1986).
28. Memorandum from Board of Regents affirmative action officer Bruce Rose to chancellor search committee, April 17, 1986.
29. Interview with Robert Lee, January 15, 1987.
30. Interview with Paul Ylvisaker, November 11, 1986. See also minutes of the Board of Regents meeting of June 9, 1986.
31. Interview with Janet Eisner, December 5, 1986. See also letter from Janet Eisner to search committee, June 12, 1986.
32. Letters to Paul Ylvisaker from Kenneth Lemanski, March 11, 1986, and from Raymond Jordan, March 12, 1986. It should be noted that the letter from the Massachusetts Black Legislative Caucus was submitted three days prior to the March 15 application deadline and well before the candidacy of Franklyn Jenifer became known publicly.
33. Interview with James Howell, February 2, 1987.
34. *Boston Globe*, October 1, 1987.
35. Interview with David Knapp, November 26, 1986.
36. Interview with Franklyn Jenifer, September 3, 1987.
37. Board of Regents, "Candidates' Experience" (mimeographed).

38. Board of Regents, "Actions Taken at Final Meeting of the Regents Chancellor Search Committee," June 19, 1986.
39. Interviews with Mary Lou Anderson, November 25, 1986, and Eileen Parise, December 4, 1986.
40. Interview with Joyce King, January 27, 1987.
41. Robert Kuttner, "The Backfires of the Massachusetts Miracle," *Boston Globe*, May 30, 1988.
42. Minutes of the Board of Regents meeting of July 1, 1986.
43. Letter from Paul Ylvisaker to Governor Michael Dukakis, July 1, 1986.
44. Letter from Janet Eisner to Governor Michael Dukakis, July 7, 1986.
45. Interview with Edward Lashman, May 12, 1988. See also Scot Lehigh, "Indelicate Matters: Dukakis's Untrusted Adviser Moves Up," *Boston Phoenix*, July 15, 1986; and A. A. Michelson, "Politics and Education," *Boston Globe*, July 12, 1986.
46. Interview with Kathleen Harrington, March 10, 1987.
47. Interview with Edward Lashman, May 12, 1988.
48. David Nyhan, "Dukakis Takes Aim at Collins," *Boston Globe*, July 13, 1986.
49. See Richard Gaines and Michael Segal, *Dukakis and the Reform Impulse* (Boston: Quinlan Press, 1987), pp. 209–218. Curiously, the authors of this adulatory political biography make no mention whatsoever of the Regents chancellor search controversy in 1986. This is a serious omission in light of their emphasis on the traditional politics of the Irish regulars versus the new politics of the Dukakis reformers. The episode is likewise omitted in the biography by Charles Kenney and Robert L. Turner, *Dukakis: An American Odyssey* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988).
50. Interview with James Collins, February 11, 1987.
51. Scot Lehigh, "Politics," *Boston Phoenix*, August 12, 1986.
52. *Boston Globe*, July 6, 1986, July 29, 1986.
53. Television transcript, "Education in Massachusetts: Opportunity for All" (mimeographed, July 10, 1986).
54. Interview with Kathleen Harrington, March 10, 1987.
55. Letter from Attorney General Francis X. Bellotti to Gerard F. Doherty, July 25, 1986.
56. *Boston Globe*, July 25, 1986.
57. Minutes of the Board of Regents special meeting of August 5, 1986.
58. *Boston Globe*, August 14, 1986.
59. Interview with Franklyn Jenifer, September 3, 1987.
60. Interview with Edward Lashman, May 12, 1988.
61. Minutes of the Board of Regents meeting of September 9, 1986.
62. For a defense of the Collins position see Gerard Doherty, "The Case for Collins," *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1986, and Jerome M. Mileur, "Dukakis: Skilled at Political Wiring," *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, July 6, 1986.
63. Interview with former Senate president Maurice A. Donahue, September 6, 1988.
64. Interview with James Collins, February 11, 1987.
65. See Robert Wood, "Three Steps to Improve Board of Regents," *Boston Globe*, September 4, 1986.
66. Millett, p. 256.

Roxbury, Boston, and the Boston SMSA:

Socioeconomic Trends 1960–1985

Sally Brewster Moulton

Socioeconomic trends for a primarily black and poor urban area, Roxbury, Massachusetts, are compared to those of the surrounding city of Boston and the Boston Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) for the period 1960 to 1985. Patterns in income, poverty, labor force participation, educational attainment, and racial composition are examined for each of the three areas. The chief purpose of the analysis is to determine the nature of gaps between Roxbury residents and the rest of the metropolitan area as well as the ways in which such gaps have changed over time.

The findings indicate that, despite growth in income, labor force participation, and educational achievement and the presence of a black middle class, Roxbury residents on the whole have tended to fall further behind residents in the city and the SMSA. The income gap in particular has widened substantially, and the incidence of poverty remains at an extremely high level. There is also evidence of an underclass. Structural explanations are offered for the existence of and increase in poverty, and policy implications are explored.

Introduction

Every Major American city contains slums, symbols of social and economic inequality. Slums are areas “characterized by poverty, poor housing, and squalor.”¹ Popular belief holds that these characteristics plus crime and pervasive social disintegration are the norm in such areas. Once labeled as poor, run-down, and crime-ridden, these areas seem to be forgotten except in occasional news coverage focusing on their undesirable conditions.²

Many, though by no means all, slum residents fall at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy and consequently have extremely limited access to and benefit from educational, economic, political, and health resources. They are therefore limited in their ability to participate in various aspects of society. Despite a long history of efforts in the United States to improve slum conditions, ranging from the work of social reformers such as Jane Addams in turn-of-the-century Chicago to the 1960s War on Poverty, those conditions remain. Recent studies have noted the emergence of a more or less permanent underclass — a subgroup of slum dwellers that is socially and economically far removed from the

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mainstream and unlikely to catch up under present circumstances.³

This article investigates socioeconomic trends from 1960 to 1985 in a primarily black urban area, Roxbury, Massachusetts, parts of which fit the definition of a slum. The analysis has two main purposes. The first is to examine patterns in Roxbury's income, poverty, labor force participation, and educational attainment as well as in its racial composition. Race is an important aspect of this study not only because blacks constitute the majority of Roxbury's population but also because race is a significant factor in discrimination and therefore in poverty. The profile for Roxbury is then contrasted with that of the city of Boston and the Boston Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). Cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses are used to explore the nature of gaps between Roxbury and the rest of the metropolitan area and to determine if and how such gaps have changed over time.

The second purpose of the study is to explore the existence of an underclass among Roxbury's poor and to determine just how far removed from the mainstream such a group might be. A key question is how to explain the presence of such a group in the midst of a strong local economy. The concluding section of the article focuses on the study's implications for the poor, for Roxbury, and for policy formulation.

Theoretical Background

Social scientists describing the slum have frequently applied the social disorganization perspective.⁴ From this point of view, the slum is a pathological environment, a social jungle, typified by limited social integration, a wide range of ubiquitous deviant behaviors, and little if any respect for dominant social values. In the 1920s, for example, the urban sociologist Zorbaugh studied a Chicago slum and wrote,

The slum is a distinctive area of disintegration and disorganization . . . of dilapidated dwellings . . . of freedom and individualism. Over large stretches of the slum men neither know nor trust their neighbors. . . . A large part of the native population is transient: prostitutes, criminals, outlaws, hobos. And here are congregated the "undesirable" alien groups, such as the Chinese and the Negro. . . . A cumulative process of natural selection is continually going on as the more ambitious and energetic keep moving out and the unadjusted, the dregs, and the outlaws accumulate. . . . The slum comes to be characterized, then, not only by mean streets and ramshackle buildings, but by well-defined types of submerged humanity. . . . The life of the slum is lived almost entirely [outside] the conventional world. . . . The slum is a confused social world to those who grow up in it [partly because of its] cosmopolitan nature . . . but . . . more directly [because of] the [mal]functioning of the slum family and the slum community.⁵

Similar points have been made in one way or another ever since. Take, for example, this very recent description by R. C. Longworth of another Chicago slum:

North Lawndale is the end of the road. Many of its residents, perhaps most, have lost hope for something better. Trapped by a disappearing economy and a malignant way of life, mired in welfare dependence, illegitimacy and violent crime, they are unable or unwilling to escape.⁶

Although sixty years and a variety of social programs separate these two accounts, they have many similarities. Both focus on pathological aspects, presenting slums as the end of the road populated by the dregs of society and as malignant places largely beyond the

conventional world. While Zorbaugh's description strictly reflects a social disorganization perspective, Longworth's injects something of a structural explanation as well ("trapped by a disappearing economy"). Although the ethnic and racial composition of American slums has changed over the course of this century (blacks and Hispanics now predominate) and the causal explanations have shifted, the problems remain much the same.⁷

Explanations for the perpetuation of slums and poverty (and their perpetual existence seems taken for granted) have not been limited to the social disorganization perspective. Indeed, the social disorganization view has been dismissed on the basis that it ignores an often high level of social organization that simply does not correspond to middle-class ways.⁸

The culture of poverty thesis, advanced in the late 1950s, suggests that the poor are set apart from the rest of society by distinct cultural values that are at odds with mainstream beliefs in hard work, ambition, and short-term sacrifice as a way to reach desired long-term goals.⁹ Not only are the values of the poor different, according to this view, but they are passed from one generation to the next, thus ensuring that — and explaining why — "the poor are always with us."

Yet another type of explanation, the structural, looks beyond the individual to society as a whole.¹⁰ Structural analysis assumes that the individual is subject to the constraints of social circumstances that are not fully under his or her control. Personal choices, in other words, are affected by one's position in the social system. No individual is literally free to chart any life course whatsoever, but rather must choose between socially structured (and limited) alternatives. Those with fewer personal resources generally have less access to socially desired goods and services and consequently have fewer options with respect to education, work, political participation, lifestyle, and so on.

From this perspective the poor are responsible neither for becoming poor nor for ceasing to be so. Poverty is not seen as simply a matter of individual will. Rather, it is believed to result from the way in which social, economic, and political activities are structured, which in turn affects the points at which their benefits and rewards are accessible to different segments of society.

Structural analysis therefore seeks to explain how the social structure causes and perpetuates poverty, that is, how social institutions such as education preserve a particular socioeconomic hierarchy. In the United States, for example, the quality of education and the range of educational choices generally available to different economic and racial groups vary significantly. As a result, the level of educational attainment also tends to vary among groups, and educational level in turn determines the types of jobs that members of the groups are most likely to obtain.

It also has been suggested that the structure of education is closely tied to the demand of the economy. Historically, changes in the organization of work and industry have preceded changes in the structure of education. The linking force is that education plays a socially integrative function by preparing students to assume positions in the economy as it exists (or as the owners and managers of work organizations anticipate that it will exist in the near term).¹¹ Education thus inevitably helps to maintain the status quo, even as it produces a small minority of individuals who will subsequently hold positions in which it is possible to initiate change.

The structure of the economy, politics, and health care can be investigated in a similar fashion. It can be shown that the point at which the individual is able to tie into each structure determines much about that person's options and life chances.¹²

The applicability of the social disorganization, culture of poverty, and structural perspectives will be explored in the conclusion. Clearly, they are based on very different sets of assumptions, which determine the kinds of questions that are asked as well as the types of solutions likely to be identified.

Methodology

To describe socioeconomic trends in Roxbury and to contrast them with those of the surrounding city and metropolitan area, data from two sources were used. Data for Roxbury census tracts as well as for Boston and the SMSA for 1960, 1970, and 1980 were taken from the U.S. census. However, because the latest census figures were eight years old at the time of this writing, Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) data are used where possible to show trends through 1985.

In selecting and analyzing data, attention was paid to income, poverty, labor force participation, education, and racial composition. Poverty was defined according to the official poverty level, which in 1981 was \$9,287 for a family of four.¹³ However, use of this definition results in an extremely limited view that seems to say that those living above the poverty line are not in serious trouble. A strong argument can be made to the contrary.¹⁴

The concept of labor force participation designates as labor force participants the employed as well as the unemployed who are available for and seeking work. Those considered not in the labor force include such groups as discouraged workers who have given up looking for a job, the retired, and the institutionalized.

Where possible, Roxbury data were compared with similar information for the city of Boston and the Boston SMSA to show what types of differences exist. Comparisons were made between (1) the total populations of Roxbury, Boston, and the SMSA; (2) the black population in each of the three areas; and (3) Roxbury's blacks and the total Boston and SMSA populations.

The discussion, however, does not deal with statements of causality (e.g., because the proportion of blacks in Roxbury increased, the income gap between Roxbury and the SMSA grew) but with statements of association (e.g., as the proportion of blacks in Roxbury increased, the income gap between Roxbury and the SMSA also increased). The identification of such associations is the heart of exploratory analysis and serves to focus attention on issues requiring causal explanation.

The analysis has three parts. First, 1980 census data are presented for all twenty-one Roxbury census tracts to determine the extent of homogeneity within the area and to compare Roxbury to the city and SMSA in which it is located. Second, data from the three decennial censuses — 1960, 1970, and 1980 — are analyzed for two Roxbury tracts, numbers 812 and 818. These two tracts were chosen at random from among the nine in Roxbury whose boundaries did not change between 1960 and 1980 (see Appendix A). Their social and economic trends are discussed and contrasted with those of Boston and the Boston SMSA. Finally, Boston Redevelopment Authority data for the total Roxbury and Boston populations are described, and the analysis of trends is updated through 1985.

Both the census and the BRA data have some limitations. Between 1970 and 1980, the U.S. Census Bureau changed its method of classifying the population of Spanish origin.¹⁵ In addition, different aggregate measures of education were used over time (shown later in Table 9). Consequently, these types of data are not strictly comparable across all three censuses. Census tract data in 1960 and 1970 were rarely broken down by race, so it is not

possible to analyze trends from 1960 to 1980 for Roxbury blacks versus the total and black populations of Boston and the metropolitan area. In addition, data often were not published for tracts if there were fewer than 400 individuals in the category of interest.¹⁶

BRA surveys cover Boston and its neighborhoods, but not the SMSA. Furthermore, city data are not broken down by census tract and are broken down only rarely by race. This limits the extent of comparisons that can be made between data from the 1980 census and the BRA surveys.¹⁷

History of Roxbury

Roxbury's history reaches back to 1639, almost to the beginning of European settlement in New England. Just over one hundred years ago, it was a quiet village on the outskirts of Boston. By the turn of the century, it had become a fashionable, white, Protestant suburb. During the next several decades, its population gradually changed to Irish Catholic, then Jewish, and finally black.¹⁸ Six of Roxbury's twenty-one census tracts were already over 50% black by 1950.¹⁹ By 1980, this was true for fourteen of the tracts, of which eleven were 80% to 95% black (Table 1). While Roxbury continues to be a primarily black area, recently Hispanics have been increasing as a percentage of its population.²⁰

Lower Roxbury, adjacent to downtown Boston, had become the city's black slum by the early 1950s while Upper Roxbury was then home to the black middle class. In the 1980s, Roxbury still exhibits this diversity. Although on the whole its socioeconomic status has declined sharply over the last century, today its residents range from the middle or upper middle to the underclass.

With the shift to an increasingly black population, a large percentage of which lived in or near poverty, Roxbury's public services and its housing stock deteriorated. A study conducted in the late 1960s described the area by saying that "most of the elegant homes had become crumbling hulks, and the old trees shaded vacant, littered lots."²¹ Another study from the same period reported that the area had "a disproportionate share of Boston's housing dilapidation, school deterioration, reported crime, AFDC, and reported juvenile delinquency."²² Whatever the 1960s War on Poverty attempted to do for the area, it was still possible in 1985 to describe Roxbury as "the city's poorest neighborhood," which "for the past 30 years . . . has contained pockets of poverty that rival parts of the rural South."²³

While the black middle class in Roxbury and Boston has grown in recent years and blacks as a whole have made some economic gains, major disparities remain. A 1985 report, "The Emerging Black Community of Boston," prepared by eight black faculty members of Boston area colleges, found that the city's blacks (and this certainly includes those living in Roxbury, which has become the center of Boston's black community) continued to experience economic and political disadvantage to a disproportionate degree.²⁴ Boston's mayor, Raymond Flynn, publicly objected that the study was based on outdated (i.e., 1980) census information and that conditions had changed.²⁵

Although this report's chapter on the economic status of Boston blacks used 1980 census data for poverty and income, it also presented more recent information concerning the sectoral location of jobs being created by the economic boom in Boston. By and large, new jobs have been created in industrial sectors in which black employment has been disproportionately low, because of factors such as inadequate education, the geographical location of firms in the growth industries, and lack of transportation. Thus the black pop-

Table 1

**Population by Race and Ethnic Origin in the Boston
SMSA, the City of Boston, and the 21 Roxbury
Census Tracts, 1980**

	Total	Black		Spanish Origin	
		%	Number	%	Number
SMSA	2,763,357	6	160,658	2	66,786
Boston	562,994	23	126,438	7	36,430
Roxbury	55,567	69	38,192*	—	4,752*
Roxbury Census Tract					
801	311	—†	—	—	—
802	1,420	44	622	29	413
803	2,384	80	1,915	17	405
804	1,679	92	1,546	—	—
805	4,236	89	3,775	—	—
806	1,033	86	887	—	—
807	309	—	—	—	—
808	1,977	43	858	53	1,053
809	3,102	13	391	14	426
810	4,737	25	1,175	11	501
811	2,709	22	590	—	—
812	4,131	63	2,590	28	1,165
813	4,094	72	2,954	19	789
814	1,719	62	1,061	—	—
815	2,545	88	2,238	—	—
816	651	79	513	—	—
817	3,576	94	3,355	—	—
818	2,642	90	2,375	—	—
819	3,157	92	2,908	—	—
820	3,450	88	3,024	—	—
821	5,705	95	5,415	—	—

*This is an approximate total. Percentages based on this number also are approximate.

†Data not published for tracts in which blacks and Spanish-origin individuals numbered less than 400.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts*, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC80-2-98 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1983), Table P-1: "General Characteristics of Persons: 1980"; Table P-14: "Social and Labor Force Characteristics of Black Persons: 1980"; Table P-20: "Social and Labor Force Characteristics of Spanish Origin Persons: 1980."

ulation has encountered structural barriers to full participation in the growth of the local economy. It is unlikely that recent economic growth will have had much effect on the gap between blacks and the total population.

The most recent available data substantiates this interpretation. From 1979 to 1984, Roxbury's median family income grew far more slowly than Boston's (9% versus 38%), and as a result the already considerable income gap widened. At the same time, family poverty increased in both Roxbury and Boston (to 32% and 22%, respectively) while Boston's black poverty rate continued unchanged at 29%.²⁶

As if to underscore these dismal statistics, a recent though unsuccessful movement was mounted by some minority residents of Roxbury and several adjacent areas to secede from the city of Boston. Secession was seen as the only way for residents to gain control over land use decisions that affect them. They particularly feared the sort of sweeping displacement by city development projects that had occurred in the poor West End and South End neighborhoods in previous decades.²⁷ Even though the secession plan was voted

down, the choice of such a solution indicates the extent to which minorities in this area felt shut out of effective participation in the political process as well as their desire to correct the situation.

It can be seen that great disparities existed as recently as 1985 between the poor and the not-poor, between the majority of blacks and the general population, and therefore between Roxbury and the city of Boston. The following data show these differences in greater detail.

1980 Cross-Sectional Analysis: Roxbury Compared to the City of Boston and the Boston SMSA

Population by Race

In 1980, Roxbury's population of 55,567 was spread over twenty-one census tracts (Table 1 and Appendix A). Blacks accounted for about 69% of its population versus 23% of Boston's and 6% of the SMSA's. Note that there were roughly 161,000 blacks in the SMSA, the majority of whom (126,000) lived in Boston. Of these, 38,000 lived in Roxbury. So although Roxbury had a much higher concentration of blacks than Boston, and more especially than the SMSA, it contained only about a third of Boston's and a quarter of the SMSA's black population.

Roxbury's tracts were 13% to 95% black. A quarter were less than 50% black while half were over 80% black. More than a tenth of Boston's Spanish-origin population lived in Roxbury in 1980.²⁸ They were located primarily in seven tracts, where they made up 11% to 53% of the population. Nowhere in Roxbury did the Spanish-origin population reach the high levels of concentration found for blacks.

Median Family Income

In 1980, median family income in the SMSA as a whole was \$22,848 while in Boston it was \$16,062. By contrast, it ranged from \$6,487 to \$14,267 in all but one of the Roxbury census tracts (Table 2). The remaining tract, with a median family income of \$19,063, was the only one that exceeded the Boston median. None of the tracts had a median as high as that for the entire SMSA.

Within the Roxbury tracts, there was some diversity. The highest median family income was three times the size of the lowest one. However, there was a considerable gap between the highest and second highest median — almost \$5,000. With one exception, median income in Roxbury was equal to 40% to 89% of the Boston median, but only 28% to 62% of the SMSA's. The highest median in Roxbury (\$19,063) was 20% greater than that in Boston, but still only 83% of that in the SMSA. The lowest in Roxbury (\$6,487) was little more than a quarter of the lowest in the SMSA.

These figures should cause considerable concern as they show a very unequal distribution of income. The median for Boston as a whole was only 70% of that for the entire SMSA, while the Roxbury medians with one exception were much lower than Boston's. Neither Boston nor Roxbury compares well by this measure to the metropolitan area as a whole. Roxbury, however, has fared especially poorly, and many of its tracts contain a large proportion of very poor families.

Making a similar analysis using data for only black families is more sobering still. In 1980, the median income for black families was \$12,775 in the SMSA and \$11,724 in Boston. By contrast, it ranged from \$6,250 to \$13,816 in the Roxbury census tracts.

Table 2

**Median Family Income, Percentage of Families
Below the Poverty Line, Labor Force Status, and
Education in the Boston SMSA, the City of Boston,
and the 21 Roxbury Census Tracts, for the Total and
Black Populations, 1980**

	Median Family Income		% of Families Below Poverty Line		% of Persons 16 + Years Old in Labor Force		% of Persons 16 + Years Old Unemployed		% of Persons 25 + Years Old Graduated from High School	
	Total	Black	Total	Black	Total	Black	Total	Black	Total	Black
SMSA	\$22,848	\$12,775	7%	25%	64%	61%	5%	8%	77%	65%
Boston	16,062	11,724	17	28	60	59	6	9	68	62
Roxbury Census Tract										
801	7,083	—*	46	—	68	—	5	—	36	—
802	14,267	12,898	22	22	61	67	3	—	49	64
803	6,768	7,591	49	45	48	50	16	18	52	55
804	11,090	11,210	29	27	65	66	17	17	47	48
805	8,285	8,244	26	26	47	47	10	11	61	59
806	6,487	6,250	57	57	56	61	17	19	39	42
807	19,063	—	—	—	69	—	14	—	77	—
808	7,045	6,515	46	44	47	38	11	10	42	42
809	12,907	11,776	20	28	60	62	7	7	82	86
810	10,371	8,350	32	36	60	68	6	11	70	66
811	12,731	11,437	17	17	54	65	7	13	70	66
812	9,351	8,488	37	37	52	48	10	13	45	44
813	8,242	10,181	43	36	44	49	12	12	50	50
814	7,969	8,828	37	32	48	48	7	—	53	46
815	13,194	13,194	21	21	49	53	11	11	62	62
816	13,571	13,816	12	14	62	60	16	10	71	66
817	13,498	13,379	18	19	54	55	7	6	60	60
818	11,321	11,536	27	24	55	57	6	6	54	53
819	13,012	13,488	13	11	62	64	7	7	57	59
820	11,630	12,083	28	25	53	57	10	10	60	62
821	9,664	9,453	33	35	53	53	13	13	57	56

*Data not published for tracts in which blacks and Spanish-origin individuals numbered less than 400.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts*, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC80-2-98 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1983), Table P-9: "Social Characteristics of Persons: 1980"; Table P-10: "Labor Force and Disability Characteristics of Persons: 1980"; Table P-11: "Income and Poverty Status in 1979: 1980"; Table P-14: "Social and Labor Force Characteristics of Black Persons: 1980"; Table P-15: "Occupation, Income in 1979, and Poverty Status in 1979 of Black Persons: 1980."

While the Boston median was 92% of the SMSA median for black families, five of the Roxbury tracts had medians that were higher than the SMSA's. This is somewhat misleading as it gives the impression that black families fared better economically in Roxbury than elsewhere in the SMSA. In a few of the SMSA towns, the median income for black families was much higher than in Roxbury. In Peabody, it was \$41,239 and in Newton it was \$31,611, but these are rare exceptions.²⁹

In thirteen (or 62%) of the Roxbury tracts the median black family income was less than that for all black families in the SMSA. In eight tracts, the median income for black families was less than three-fourths of the SMSA's median for this group. Overall, Roxbury's

black families tended to fall somewhat below black families in the SMSA as a whole. There was less discrepancy between black families in Roxbury and those in Boston as a whole.

The median for black families in the SMSA (\$12,775) was only 56% of the median for all SMSA families combined (\$22,848). The median family income for black families in Boston (\$11,724) was 73% of the median for all Boston families but just 51% of the SMSA's median for all families. While these numbers make it appear that black families were relatively better off in Boston than in the SMSA, it should be remembered that Boston families as a whole did not fare as well as those in the SMSA as a whole. These comparisons, particularly those between black families and all families combined, show very clearly the immense gap that existed in 1980 between the majority of blacks in Roxbury, Boston, and the SMSA and the rest of the population.

Families Below the Poverty Line

The data given in Table 2 and analyzed in the previous section suggest that the rate of poverty in Roxbury should be higher than in Boston and the SMSA; indeed, that was the case. Census poverty data from 1980 (adjusted by family size) show the proportion of families falling below the poverty line (Table 2): 7% in the SMSA, 17% in Boston, and 12% to 57% in the Roxbury tracts. Only three tracts had a poverty rate equal to or lower than Boston's and none had one as low as that in the SMSA. Eighty percent of the tracts had poverty rates higher than for either Boston or the SMSA. Seventy percent had rates at least three times that of the SMSA (i.e., 21% or higher). In a quarter of the tracts, more than 40% met the official poverty criteria. That is approximately six or more times the rate for the SMSA. Roxbury families were thus more likely to live in poverty than families in either Boston or the SMSA as a whole.

Table 3 breaks down the family poverty data according to total, black, and Spanish-origin population. In 1980, 25% of the SMSA's black families and 28% of Boston's fell below the poverty line. This translates into rates that are roughly three to four times that for the total SMSA population (7%) and about two-thirds greater than that for the total Boston population. Thus, throughout the metropolitan area, black families were disproportionately likely to live in poverty.

By contrast, there was very little difference in Roxbury between black and total poverty rates, largely because of the high proportion of blacks in many tracts. However, in five tracts blacks accounted for less than 50% of the population. In three of these, the poverty rate for black families was the same as or slightly lower than that for nonblacks, while in two of the tracts it was four to eight percentage points higher. Thus in Roxbury there was a less consistent pattern of disadvantage among blacks compared to nonblacks.

However, comparing poverty among black families in Roxbury, Boston, and the SMSA shows a different picture. In the Roxbury tracts, the percentage of black families living below the poverty line varied from 11% to 57%. In one-third of the tracts, the poverty rate for black families was lower than the rate in the SMSA for black families. In half the tracts the rate was lower than the Boston rate for black families. Since the Boston and SMSA rates were fairly similar (28% and 25%, respectively), it is reasonably accurate to say that in half of the Roxbury tracts poverty was less frequent among black families than it was among black families in Boston and the SMSA as a whole. It is also true that poverty was more common among black families in 38% of the tracts than it was among black families in Boston and the SMSA. Thus, in 1980, Roxbury tracts were by no means homogeneous with respect to the economic status of their residents.

Table 3

**Families Below the Poverty Line in the Total, Black,
and Spanish-Origin Populations in the Boston
SMSA, the City of Boston, and the 21 Roxbury
Census Tracts, 1980**

	% of All Families Below Poverty Line	% of Black Families Below Poverty Line	% of Spanish-Origin Families Below Poverty Line
SMSA	7%	25%	33%
Boston	17	28	41
Roxbury Census Tract			
801	46	—*	—
802	22	22	37
803	49	45	79
804	29	27	—
805	26	26	—
806	57	57	—
807	—	—	—
808	46	44	47
809	20	28	48
810	32	36	50
811	17	17	—
812	37	37	41
813	43	36	64
814	37	32	—
815	21	21	—
816	12	14	—
817	18	19	—
818	27	24	—
819	13	11	—
820	28	25	—
821	33	35	—

*Data not published for tracts in which blacks and Spanish-origin individuals numbered less than 400.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts*, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC80-2-98 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1983), Table P-11: "Income and Poverty Status in 1979: 1980"; Table P-15: "Occupation, Income in 1979, and Poverty Status in 1979 of Black Persons: 1980"; Table P-21: "Occupation, Income in 1979, and Poverty Status in 1979 of Spanish Origin Persons: 1980."

Compared to black families, a considerably higher percentage of Spanish-origin families fell below the poverty line in 1980 (Table 3). In the SMSA as a whole, the rate was 33%, compared to 25% for black families and 7% for all families. It was thus one-third higher than the black rate and 4.5 times the rate for the total SMSA population. In Boston, the poverty rate for Spanish-origin families was 41%, compared to 28% for black families and 17% for all families combined. The rate in Boston for Spanish-origin families was 46% higher than that for black families and 2.5 times the rate for all families. Furthermore, the 41% poverty rate for Boston's Spanish-origin population is almost six times higher than the 7% rate for SMSA families as a whole.

This pattern continued in the seven Roxbury tracts for which data are available concerning Spanish-origin families. Their poverty rate varied from 37% to 79%, compared to 11% to 57% for black families, and families of Spanish origin were from 6% to 76%

more likely to live in poverty than blacks in the same census tract. Clearly, as of 1980, those of Spanish origin tended to be much more economically disadvantaged than blacks in the population as a whole, not only in the SMSA and Boston but in Roxbury as well.

Economic disadvantage very clearly was a common feature of life in Roxbury in 1980. If it is assumed that lack of education and work contribute significantly to economic disadvantage, then one should find lower levels of education and labor force participation in Roxbury than in Boston and the SMSA. This did not always prove to be the case.

Education

The rate of high school completion among all individuals aged twenty-five and older was 77% in the SMSA, 68% in Boston, and 36% to 82% in the Roxbury tracts (Table 2). In three-fourths (16) of the Roxbury tracts, the high school completion rate was 6 to 32 percentage points lower than that for either the SMSA or Boston.

The proportion of the total population that had completed four or more years of college was 25% in the SMSA, 20% in Boston, and from 2% to 18% in the Roxbury tracts, except tract 809, which had a rate of 32% (Table 4). In ten of the tracts, the percentage of individuals with four or more years of college was less than half the rate for either the SMSA or Boston.

At first glance, the generally lower levels of educational attainment might seem to explain the income disparity previously described. However, in a quarter of the tracts the high school completion rate exceeded Boston's rate and in two of these the rate was equal to or greater than that for the SMSA. These tracts also tended to have among the highest rates of college completion in Roxbury, rates that were close to or above those for Boston. Only one tract (809) had a rate that exceeded the SMSA's. If educational attainment were the sole factor affecting income distribution, then a quarter (i.e., five) of the Roxbury tracts should have had a median family income roughly equal to Boston's and one should have equaled or exceeded the SMSA's. This was not the case, as only one tract had a median income greater than Boston's and none equaled or exceeded the SMSA's.

It is interesting that among the five tracts with the highest high school completion rates for the population as a whole, three had a very low percentage of black residents. Only two ranked in the top five with respect to median family income (and one of these was 79% black). The others placed seventh, eighth, and twelfth on income.

The rate of high school completion among blacks aged twenty-five and over was 65% in the SMSA, 62% in Boston, and from 42% to 66% in the Roxbury tracts, with one exception (in tract 809, 86% of black adults had finished high school). Black high school completion rates tended to lag behind those for the total Boston and SMSA populations. Furthermore, blacks in the majority of Roxbury tracts were less likely to have finished high school than blacks in Boston or the SMSA as a whole. However, in one-third (or seven) of the tracts, black high school completion rates were equal to or greater than the black rate for Boston, and four of these also exceeded the black rate for the SMSA.

The rate of college completion among blacks was 12% in the SMSA, 9% in Boston, and from 2% to 17% in the Roxbury tracts (again with the exception of tract 809, in which the rate was 31%). Nine of the tracts had black college graduation rates that exceeded the rate for blacks in Boston, while six had rates that exceeded the rate for blacks in the SMSA.

Of the seven tracts with the highest median income for black families, five also ranked among the top seven with respect to black high school and college completion rates. Thus education and income were more closely related when controlling for race than when considering the population as a whole.

Table 4

**Educational Attainment for the Total and Black
Populations in the Boston SMSA, the City of Boston,
and the 21 Roxbury Census Tracts, 1980**

	Less than High School		High School plus 1-3 Years of College*		4 Years or More of College	
	Total	Black	Total	Black	Total	Black
SMSA	23%	35%	52%	53%	25%	12%
Boston	32	39	48	53	20	9
Roxbury Census Tract						
801	64	—	36	—	—	—
802	51	36	38	51	11	13
803	48	44	43	46	9	10
804	53	52	44	45	3	3
805	39	41	54	53	7	6
806	61	59	37	39	2	2
807	23	—	59	—	18	—
808	58	58	26	25	16	17
809	19	14	49	65	32	31
810	29	33	53	57	18	10
811	30	33	53	52	17	15
812	55	56	41	41	4	3
813	50	49	47	48	3	3
814	47	54	35	38	18	8
815	38	38	49	50	13	12
816	29	33	56	56	15	11
817	41	40	53	55	6	5
818	46	47	47	46	7	7
819	43	41	45	47	12	12
820	40	38	52	54	8	8
821	43	43	45	49	8	8

*High school and 1 to 3 years of college have been combined into one category because, with few exceptions, the major differences appear to occur in the groups "Less than High School" and "4 Years or More of College."

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC80-2-98* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1983), Table P-9: "Social Characteristics of Persons: 1980"; Table P-14: "Social and Labor Force Characteristics of Black Persons: 1980."

Striking differences exist between the educational attainment of blacks and that of the total population. In only one tract (809) did the black high school completion rate equal or exceed that for the total population in either Boston or the SMSA, while in 43 % of the tracts it was 10 percentage points or more below Boston's and 20 percentage points or more below the SMSA's. With respect to college completion, only one tract (809) had a rate greater than the rates for the total populations of the SMSA and Boston. In three-fourths of the Roxbury tracts, the percentage of blacks graduating from college was less than half the total SMSA rate, while in 60 % it was less than half the total Boston rate. If black educational attainment in the Roxbury tracts sometimes lagged behind that for blacks in Boston and the SMSA, it generally lagged far behind that for the total population.

It also should be noted that in almost one-third of the Roxbury tracts, less than 50 % of adults had finished high school. In about half, less than 55 % had finished. Generally, these tracts also had the greatest rates of poverty. Yet two of the five tracts with greater total high

school completion rates than Boston's (809 and 810) also had greater poverty rates than Boston. The poverty rate in tract 810 was almost twice that in Boston.

Compared to Boston, tract 810 had a slightly lower percentage of adults who had not finished high school, a slightly higher percentage of high school graduates, and a slightly lower percentage of college graduates. In other words, the tract had slightly less disadvantage at the lower end of the educational attainment scale and slightly less advantage at the upper end. It also had high labor force participation and average unemployment. The percentage of its population made up of blacks (25%) and Hispanics (11%) was a little higher than Boston's. Overall, tract 810 and Boston were fairly similar, yet they differed substantially with regard to poverty, and the question is why. Factors that were beyond the scope of this study, such as the distribution by industry and occupation of the jobs held by Roxbury residents and the type of transportation to which residents have access, are among the probable explanations.

Labor Force Participation in the Total Population

Among individuals aged sixteen and older, the 1980 labor force participation rate was 64% in the SMSA, 60% in Boston, and 44% to 69% in the Roxbury tracts (Table 2). In 40% of the Roxbury tracts, the labor force participation rate was equal to or greater than Boston's. In approximately another third, less than half the population aged sixteen and over was in the labor force. A fairly similar picture emerges from the black labor force participation data in Table 2. In sixteen (76%) of the tracts, black labor force participation was equal to or greater than participation for the tract population as a whole.

While there was a tendency for tracts with higher individual labor force participation rates to have higher median family incomes and lower rates of family poverty, in some cases this association was not present. For example, for the population as a whole, the tracts with the second and third highest labor force participation rates (tracts 801 and 804) had the eleventh and eighteenth highest median family incomes and the fourth and tenth highest family poverty rates. Tract 801, with a labor force participation rate of 68%, which was higher than that of either the SMSA or Boston, and a low unemployment rate of 5% nevertheless had a very low median family income (\$7,083), and 46% of its families were below the poverty line. Compared to tract 801, tract 804 had a slightly lower labor force participation rate (65%) and a very high unemployment rate (17%), yet its median family income (\$11,090) was higher and its poverty rate (29%) was much lower (though in an absolute sense still very high). Possibly, the low income and high poverty in tract 801 occurred because, despite its high labor force participation rate and low unemployment, labor force participation among a disproportionate number of family heads was lower and/or less frequent and/or less well paid than among family heads in tract 804.

The data for these two tracts clearly indicate that simply having a job is not necessarily sufficient to solve the problem of poverty. The income associated with the job and, in the long run, the level of job security and opportunities for advancement are crucial factors that help determine the job's economic impact on its holder.

Total Unemployment

The unemployment rate for all individuals aged sixteen and older was 5% in the SMSA, 6% in Boston, and 3% to 17% in the Roxbury tracts (Table 2). Only four of the tracts (about 20%) had total unemployment rates as low as or lower than Boston's or the SMSA's. Two-thirds had rates that were close to or more than twice Boston's and the SMSA's.

The black unemployment rate was 8% in the SMSA and 9% in Boston. In the SMSA, unemployment was 60% higher for blacks than for the population as a whole; in Boston, it was 50% higher. Black unemployment ranged from 6% to 19% in the seventeen Roxbury tracts for which such data were published. In thirteen of these tracts (62%), black unemployment exceeded the rate for blacks in both the SMSA and Boston. These disparities (between blacks and the total population as well as between blacks in Roxbury and those in Boston and the larger metropolitan area) may stem from unequal preparation for and access to jobs, and they indicate a more uncertain existence and a potentially bleaker future.

1960–1980: Trends in Roxbury Tracts 812 and 818 Compared to the Boston SMSA and the City of Boston

Having considered selected socioeconomic factors for one point in time, it is now useful to look at trends over the twenty years from 1960 to 1980. For this section, two Roxbury tracts, 812 and 818, were chosen at random and followed from 1960 to 1980 (see map in Appendix A). Unfortunately, it was rare for census data for 1960 and 1970 to be broken down by race. However, since the concentration of blacks in both tracts increased substantially and reached very high levels during this period, trends for the overall population of the tracts will suggest what was happening to their black populations.

Population by Race

From 1960 to 1980, the total population rose by 7% in the SMSA but declined by 19% in Boston and 33% to 48% in tracts 812 and 818 (Table 5). This pattern of a sharp population loss in the central city combined with growth in the greater metropolitan area was, of course, typical of large, older cities around the country during this period.

Black population trends showed a different pattern. In general, the rate of growth in the black population was much greater than that of the population as a whole. As a result, blacks increased in absolute numbers as well as in proportion to the total population in the SMSA, Boston, and tract 812. Although the black population doubled in both the SMSA and Boston, blacks remained a very small part of the total SMSA population, accounting for only 3% in 1960 and 6% in 1980. In Boston, the total population declined as the black population grew, and the black share of the population rose from 9% to 23%. The Boston trend was repeated in tract 812 but in a much exaggerated fashion. Although the total population in tract 812 fell by one-third, the number of blacks tripled, and blacks increased from 13% to 63% of the population. Tract 818 presented a contrasting picture. Not only did its total population decline (by 48%) but so too did its black population (by 27%). However, since the decline for the total was much greater than for blacks, the proportion of blacks increased from 64% to 90%.

The shift in the population composition of these two tracts is striking. In both, the concentration of blacks grew substantially even though in tract 812 the size of the black population rose while in tract 818 it fell. The key to an analysis of these shifts is to consider what was happening concurrently. How did Boston and the two tracts fare over time, compared to one another and to the SMSA with respect to income, poverty, education, and labor force participation?

Median Family Income

Median family income more than doubled in tracts 812 and 818 and in Boston between 1960 and 1980, yet in each case it decreased sharply as a percentage of the SMSA median

Table 5

**Distribution of Population by Race* for the Boston
SMSA, the City of Boston, and Roxbury Census
Tracts 812 and 818, 1960–1980**

		SMSA	Boston	Tract 812	Tract 818
Total Population	1960	2,589,301	697,197	6,155	5,115
	1970	2,753,700	641,071	5,048	3,811
	1980	2,763,357	562,994	4,131	2,642
% Change	1960–1980	+ 7%	– 19%	– 33%	– 48%
Black Population	1960	77,781	63,165	790	3,266
	1970	127,035	104,707	2,927	3,340
	1980	160,658	126,438	2,590	2,375
% Change	1960–1980	+ 107%	+ 100%	+ 228%	– 27%
Blacks as % of Total Population	1960	3%	9%	13%	64%
	1970	5%	16%	58%	88%
	1980	6%	23%	63%	90%

*Data on people of Spanish origin are largely not available for these tracts. Also, the measures used have not been comparable across these three censuses.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1960, Census Tracts*, Final Report PHC(1)-18, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), Table P-1: "General Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960." U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1970, Census Tracts*, PHC(1)-29, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), Table P-1: "General Characteristics of the Population: 1970." For 1980 data, see Table 1 in this article.

(Tables 6 and 7). What this means, of course, is that during this period median family income was growing at a faster rate in the SMSA than in Boston and the two tracts. Median family income in tracts 812 and 818 also declined relative to the Boston median. Table 6 shows how the four areas compared in rate of income growth. It also can be seen that tract 812 consistently was the poorer of the two.

During the twenty years in question, economic gains were unequally distributed across the geographic segments of the SMSA population. All four areas under consideration experienced income growth, but the rate of growth as well as the starting points varied greatly. As a result, the twenty-year trend was one of increasing disparity not only between the central city and the greater metropolitan area but also between tracts 812 and 818 and the city in which they were located. Since tract data were not available for blacks in 1960 and 1970, trends in median family income for blacks cannot be discussed. However, as the proportion of blacks in the Boston and tract populations grew, so did the income disparity between these areas and the SMSA as a whole. Given the nature of the analysis performed here, this is simply a statement of association (i.e., of concurrent trends) and not one of cause and effect. It is, however, a very significant point and, if the necessary data for blacks were available, one could establish which racial or ethnic segments of the population were, in fact, most likely to have low incomes.

Families Below the Poverty Line

The percentage of families below the poverty line in the SMSA declined from 1960 to 1980 but showed no overall change in Boston and the two tracts (Table 8). Consequently, the disparity between the SMSA and the latter three areas grew. In 1960, Boston's poverty rate was 1.5 times that for the SMSA as a whole, while the tract rates were 2.5 to 3.4

Table 6

**Median Family Income for the Boston SMSA, City of
Boston, and Roxbury Census Tracts 812 and 818,
1960–1980**

	SMSA	Boston	Tract 812	Tract 818
1960	\$ 6,687	\$ 5,747	\$3,807	\$ 5,047
1970	11,449	9,133	4,099	6,277
1980	22,848	16,062	9,351	11,321
% Change 1960–1980	+ 242%	+ 180%	+ 146%	+ 124%

Source: See previously cited publications by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. For 1960, Final Report PHC(1)-18, Table P-1: "General Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960." For 1970, Report PHC(1)-29, Table P-4: "Income Characteristics of the Population: 1970." For 1980, report PHC80-2-98, Table P-11: "Income and Poverty Status in 1979: 1980."

Table 7

**Median Family Income for the City of Boston and
Roxbury Census Tracts 812 and 818 as a Percentage
of the Median Family Income for the Boston SMSA,
1960–1980**

	Boston	Tract 812	Tract 818
1960	86%	57%	76%
1970	80	36	55
1980	70	41	50

Source: See previously cited publications by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. For 1960, Final Report PHC(1)-18, Table P-1: "General Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960." For 1970, Report PHC(1)-29, Table P-4: "Income Characteristics of the Population: 1970." For 1980, report PHC80-2-98, Table P-11: "Income and Poverty Status in 1979: 1980."

times the SMSA's. By 1980, Boston's poverty rate was 2.4 times and the tract rates were 3.9 to 5.3 times the SMSA's. The factor(s) that reduced poverty in the SMSA as a whole did not have the same effect (or had no effect at all) on poverty in Boston and in tracts 812 and 818, at least so far as one can determine from the aggregate data presented here.

Education

Unfortunately, educational attainment data are not comparable over the three time periods. No measure covers all three census dates. Also, in 1970, when the two educational attainment measures overlap, tracts 812 and 818 are the same in median school years completed, yet tract 812 has a lower percentage of high school graduates among adults twenty-five years and older.

The two measures in Table 9 do indicate that the level of education increased steadily in the SMSA, Boston, and the two tracts between 1960 and 1980. Nevertheless, by 1980, for adults aged twenty-five and older just 45% in tract 812 and 54% in tract of 818 had finished high school, compared to 68% in Boston and 77% in the SMSA. Adults in these tracts thus tended to have considerably less education than was typical of adults in Boston and the SMSA as a whole, a situation with serious implications for their ability to compete in the job market. Furthermore, despite the gains made by 1980, the education gap between the tracts and the larger areas had widened for tract 812 and decreased very slightly

for tract 818. This should partially explain the worsening income picture in the two Roxbury tracts.

Labor Force Participation in the Total Population

From 1960 to 1980, labor force participation rose steadily in the SMSA and Boston, with the greater increase (8 percentage points) occurring in the SMSA (Table 10). Rates in the SMSA and Boston were essentially the same at the first two census dates, but by 1980 the SMSA clearly had pulled ahead. Labor force participation fluctuated in tracts 812 and 818, showing at the end of twenty years a slight gain in tract 812 and a slight loss in tract 818. Overall, the two tracts fell further behind the SMSA.

Total labor force participation in the SMSA and Boston was, on the whole, somewhat to much higher than in the two tracts. The greatest discrepancy occurred in 1970 when labor force participation rates in the SMSA and Boston were 50% higher than in tract 812 and 15% higher than in tract 818. By 1980, the gap had narrowed, with labor force participation in Boston and the SMSA 15% to 23% higher than in tract 812 and 9% to 16% higher than in tract 818. The gap between the two tracts had also narrowed, from 8 percentage points in 1960 to 3 in 1980.

Table 8

**Percentage of Families Below the Poverty Line for
the Boston SMSA, City of Boston, and Roxbury
Census Tracts 812 and 818, 1960–1980**

	SMSA	Boston	Tract 812	Tract 818
1960*	11%	17%	37%	27%
1970	6	12	43	22
1980	7	17	37	27

*All families with less than \$3,000 income.

Source: See previously cited publications by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. For 1960, Final Report PHC(1)-18, Table P-1: "General Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960." For 1970, Report PHC(1)-29, Table P-4: "Income Characteristics of the Population: 1970." For 1980, report PHC80-2-98, Table P-11: "Income and Poverty Status in 1979: 1980."

Table 9

**Educational Attainment for the Boston SMSA, City
of Boston, and Roxbury Census Tracts 812 and 818,
1960–1980**

		SMSA	Boston	Tract 812	Tract 818
Median School Years Completed by Persons Aged 25 +	1960	12.1	11.2	10.0	9.9
	1970	12.4	12.1	10.5	10.5
	1980	—*	—	—	—
% of Persons Aged 25 + Years Who Are High School Graduates	1960	—	—	—	—
	1970	64	54	35	39
	1980	77	68	45	54

*Data not available.

Source: See previously cited publications by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. For 1960, Final Report PHC(1)-18, Table P-1: "General Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960." For 1970, Report PHC(1)-29, Table P-2: "Social Characteristics of the Population: 1970." For 1980, Report PHC80-2-98, Table P-9: "Social Characteristics of Persons: 1980."

Table 10

**Labor Force and Unemployment Status for the Total
Population Aged 16 Years and Over for the Boston
SMSA, City of Boston, and Roxbury Census Tracts
812 and 818, 1960–1980***

		SMSA	Boston	Tract 812	Tract 818
Labor Force Participation	1960	56%	57%	49%	57%
	1970	60	59	40	52
	1980	64	60	52	55
Unemployment	1960	4	5	7	6
	1970	4	4	5	8
	1980	5	6	10	6

*Data from 1960 cover persons 14 years and over and thus reflect a somewhat different age group than data for 1970 and 1980.

Source: See previously cited publications by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. For 1960, Final Report PHC(1)-18, Table P-3: "Labor Force Characteristics of the Population, by Census Tracts: 1960." For 1970, Report PHC(1)-29, Table P-3: "Labor Force Characteristics of the Population: 1970." For 1980, Report PHC80-2-98, Table P-10: "Labor Force and Disability Characteristics of Persons: 1980."

Total Unemployment

From 1960 to 1980, unemployment rose slightly in the SMSA and Boston, increased substantially in tract 812, and, despite fluctuation, showed no overall change in tract 818. The unemployment rate in the SMSA tended to be 1 point lower than in Boston and from 1 to 5 points lower than in the two tracts. The gap between the SMSA and Boston on the one hand and tracts 812 and 818 on the other varied over time, showing overall a substantial increase with respect to tract 812 and a decrease with respect to tract 818.

In the SMSA, Boston, and tract 818, unemployment varied by 1 to 2 percentage points over the 1960–1980 period. These apparently small changes nonetheless resulted in the unemployment rate rising or falling by anywhere from 20% to 50%. Thus, for example, between 1970 and 1980, unemployment rose from 4% to 5% in the SMSA and from 6% to 8% in tract 818 (a 25% increase in both cases) and from 4% to 6% in Boston (a 50% increase). Most striking, however, was the situation in tract 812, where unemployment doubled, rising from 5% to 10%.

1985 Update of Socioeconomic Trends in Boston and Roxbury

Because the most recent census data are from 1980, the Boston Redevelopment Authority's 1985 Household Survey was used to update the analysis of socioeconomic trends. Using the BRA survey, however, means that data are available only for Boston and Roxbury as a whole. Census tract and SMSA data are not available and there is relatively little disaggregation by race.

Table 11 shows that, overall, Roxbury did not fare well compared to Boston in the 1980–1985 period. Median family income grew 38% in Boston, but only 9% in Roxbury. Thus, whereas Roxbury's median family income was 67% of Boston's in 1979, by 1984 it was only 53% of Boston's. Family poverty grew much more rapidly in Boston than in Roxbury (29% versus 6%), but Roxbury's rate was still 45% higher than Boston's in

Table 11

**Median Family Income, Percentage of Families
Below the Poverty Line, Labor Force Status, and
Education * for the Total Population in Boston and
Roxbury, 1980–1985**

	Median Family Income†	% of Families Below Poverty Line†	% of Persons Aged 16 + Years in Labor Force**	% of Persons Aged 16 + Years Unemployed**	% of Persons Aged 25 + Years Graduated from High School	College
Boston						
1980	\$16,062	17%	62%	6%	68%	20%
1985	22,200	22	67	6	77	28
Roxbury						
1980	10,773	30	56	7	55	8
1985	11,750	32	63	14	62	14
% of Change 1980–1985						
Boston	38%	29%	8%	0%	13%	40%
Roxbury	9	6	13	100	13	75

* The percentages given for high school and college completion are not mutually exclusive. For example, 68% of Boston's adults graduated from high school and 20% graduated from college. That is, 20% of all adults graduated from college, not 20% of those who graduated from high school.

† Data for median family income and family poverty are for 1979 and 1984. Source tables gave 1984 dollar amounts in rounded form only.

** Rates for 1980 differ from those given in the U.S. Census, which shows slightly lower labor force participation and higher unemployment rates for Boston and Roxbury.

Source: All documents listed here are from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston. Margaret C. O'Brien, *Diversity and Change in Boston's Neighborhoods, 1970-80*, Document No. 169, 1985; Gregory Perkins, *Roxbury Neighborhood Profile, 1987*, Document No. 265, February 1987; Margaret C. O'Brien and Deborah A. Oriola, *Boston at Mid-Decade: Results of the 1985 Household Survey, II: Income and Poverty*, Document No. 290, May 1987; Ann Hafrey, *Boston at Mid-Decade: Results of the 1985 Household Survey, III: Labor Force*, Document No. 291, 1987; *Roxbury Neighborhood Profile, 1988*, Document No. 323, 1988.

1984. Labor force participation grew more slowly in Boston than in Roxbury, but in 1984 Boston's labor force participation rate was still 4 points higher than Roxbury's. Furthermore, Roxbury's unemployment had doubled, from 7% to 14%, while Boston's had remained the same. Thus Roxbury's gains in labor force participation would appear to have been offset by the rise in its unemployment. Finally, as Boston and Roxbury experienced equal rates of growth in the percentage of adults aged twenty-five and over who had completed high school, the gap widened very slightly (but this does not show in Table 11, due to rounding). Both experienced rapid growth in the proportion of college graduates. Roxbury's growth was nearly twice Boston's, so the gap between them was reduced. Yet the percentage of college graduates in Roxbury in 1985 was still only half that in Boston.

Summary

Roxbury has been populated by a succession of ethnic and racial groups over the last century. Simultaneously, it has become increasingly poor, despite the continued presence of a middle class. In 1980, Roxbury was predominantly black, containing one-third of Boston's and one-quarter of the SMSA's black population. Although the majority of its twenty-one

census tracts were more than 50% black, they were by no means uniform with respect to racial composition. Some tracts had sizable white and Spanish-origin groups, the latter of which tended to be extremely poor, even by Roxbury standards.

In 1980, Roxbury showed considerable diversity with respect to education, labor force participation, and income. Nevertheless, a large proportion of its population lacked a variety of essential resources. Compared to the total Boston and SMSA populations, Roxbury inhabitants generally were less likely to have finished high school, and even less likely to have finished college. They also were less likely to be in the labor force but, if they were in it, were more likely to be unemployed. They also had substantially lower incomes and higher rates of poverty. In over half the tracts, for example, median family income was less than half the SMSA median. In almost one-third, 30% or more of the families lived below the poverty line, versus 7% in the SMSA as a whole. Roxbury clearly was disadvantaged in comparison to the city and metropolitan area surrounding it.

To put this cross-sectional description into perspective, trends over twenty years were analyzed as well. Longitudinal data for the total population in the two Roxbury tracts show that, between 1960 and 1980, tract 812 increasingly fell behind the SMSA in income, education, and labor force participation, while its poverty and unemployment rates pulled further ahead of the SMSA's. On every count, then, tract 812's level of disadvantage increased. Tract 818's experience was different. Compared to the SMSA, its education and unemployment gaps narrowed slightly, yet its income and labor force participation increasingly fell behind and its poverty rate did not change. Furthermore, poverty rates in tracts 812 and 818, at 37% and 27%, respectively, were extremely high. Thus, despite registering some absolute gains (i.e., increased educational attainment and income), on most counts these two tracts fell further behind; by 1980, they were less well off relative to the SMSA and Boston than they had been in 1960.

Since Roxbury has been a black area for some decades, merely comparing its tracts' total populations and those of Boston and the SMSA would have presented an inadequate picture. It was therefore important to compare data for Roxbury blacks with data for the black and total populations of Boston and the SMSA.

A very great disparity existed in income and poverty between blacks and the population as a whole in the SMSA in 1980 and smaller, though still important, differences existed in education and unemployment. A similar though less pronounced pattern of differences was evident within the Boston population as well. Interestingly, black labor force participation rates were quite similar to those for the total population. Within the five Roxbury tracts whose populations were less than 50% black, median family income was much lower for blacks than for the tract as a whole, even though black labor force participation and educational attainment tended to be higher than they were for the population of the tract as a whole. The recurring theme is that equal or greater levels of labor force participation (and in some cases education) were not sufficient to raise black median family income to the level found in the general population.

A very different result emerges from comparing the median family income for blacks in Roxbury with the medians for black families in the SMSA and Boston. It has been shown that the median family income for each tract's total population was much lower than the medians for the total population in the SMSA and Boston. By contrast, the median family income for black families exceeded the Boston median for black families in one-third of the tracts and the SMSA median in one-quarter of the tracts. Whereas Roxbury families in general were worse off than families living elsewhere in the SMSA, Roxbury's black families were not necessarily worse off than black families living elsewhere.

While to some it might seem counterintuitive, tract 818, with its substantially higher concentration of blacks than tract 812 (64% in 1960 versus 13% in tract 812 and 90% in 1980 versus 63% in tract 812), fared somewhat better than tract 812 with respect to income, poverty, education, labor force participation, and unemployment. This finding holds up for the tracts' total population as well as their black populations.

It is also true that the proportion of blacks in both tracts increased substantially from 1960 to 1980 and that, concurrently, the gap in education, labor force participation, income, and poverty between the two tracts and the total SMSA and Boston populations for the most part widened. Here, then, was a predominantly black area, a significant proportion of which was in some degree cut off from the economic forces benefiting most of the population. Indeed, those factors that led to an improving picture for the SMSA as a whole (e.g., an expanding local economy driven by growth in high technology, finance, and services) did not reach equally into these Roxbury tracts.³⁰ Nor, for that matter, did they reach equally into Boston, which also fell behind the SMSA during this period with respect to income and labor force participation.

Most recently, from 1980 to 1985, Roxbury's median family income fell further behind that of Boston. Its poverty rate increased. Its actual employment (i.e., labor force participation minus unemployment) declined. Its educational attainment levels rose but still remained well below Boston's. In short, the gains that were made, even where they narrowed the gap between Roxbury and Boston, scarcely suggest a major improvement in the competitiveness of Roxbury's residents in the city's (much less the SMSA's) labor market.

Despite exceptions, Roxbury's population as a whole has not caught up with the populations of the city of Boston and the Boston SMSA. Indeed, it appears that an underclass does exist in Roxbury and is, perhaps, increasing. Part of the explanation for why some of Roxbury's population belongs to the underclass lies in the widening educational and economic gaps illustrated here. It is particularly striking that such gaps should occur and remain in a metropolitan area with so many educational resources and so broad an economic base. Yet it is evident that a substantial proportion of Roxbury residents have been limited in their access to and benefit from education, work, and political participation.

Conclusions

The data presented in the cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses are open to differing interpretations. Superficially, they might seem to support a culture of poverty analysis, which, among other supposed attributes of the poor, emphasizes low commitment to work and little predilection for planning ahead.³¹ Low labor force participation could be taken as indicating low commitment to work (although it could just as well reflect a variety of legitimate reasons for not attempting to work, such as age, disability, or the presence of young children), while low educational attainment could be read as failure to plan for the future.

Unfortunately for the culture of poverty argument, even those Roxbury tracts that met or exceeded Boston and SMSA levels of labor force participation and education came nowhere near their levels of income (with one exception). Furthermore, even among those tracts with the highest labor force participation and the lowest unemployment, poverty was often exceptionally high compared to Boston and even more so to SMSA rates. These data support very strongly the concept of the working poor, namely, the idea that a segment of the population exists which, despite working on a regular and more or less full-

time basis and therefore espousing the work ethic, nevertheless remains stuck in poverty. The data therefore do not support a culture of poverty explanation.

These same data, however, do support a structural analysis, focusing on the social, economic, and political organization of the environment in which Roxbury exists and its residents must function. If those tracts that had labor force participation and education levels equal to or greater than those of the SMSA and Boston but had substantially lower incomes, then something other than failure to act on dominant cultural values must be involved. What has happened is that key social institutions have evolved in ways that, whether intentionally or not, limit the participation, and thus the progress, of racial and economic minorities.

Structural analysis suggests, for example, that the educational system (and for that matter the political system that governs education) supports or even enhances socioeconomic stratification by enabling a much lower than average proportion of the adult population among blacks and in Roxbury to achieve the level of educational attainment needed to compete successfully in the local economy. For example, even though the Boston SMSA contains a large number of colleges and universities, the rate of college graduation among the area's blacks is far lower than that for the population as a whole. Blacks, therefore, are not benefiting from the presence of abundant local resources in higher education. Furthermore, lower levels of education were associated with lower levels of labor force participation and higher levels of poverty in many Roxbury tracts. In short, the educational system, along with other social institutions, contributes to the reproduction of the class system.³²

Additional strong support for a structural explanation comes from the often profound disparities observed by race not only for education but also for income, poverty, labor force participation, and unemployment. Despite a major economic boom in Boston, the area's blacks have yet to obtain more than a disproportionately small share of its benefits.

Of course, no one social institution by itself is responsible for poverty, inequality, or any other social outcome, because none functions alone. Each institution contributes to a given social outcome in part through its effect on the ways in which classes of individuals are able to interact with other institutions. Thus, for example, individuals encounter certain effects of their experience with the educational system only when they attempt to enter the labor market, obtain health services, or participate in political processes. We thus return here to the idea of socially structured alternatives. It is the joint functioning — the continual interactions at different levels — of social institutions that produces the differing sets of alternatives available to individuals at each point in the social structure. If the range of those alternatives is such that a group (the poor or a racial minority, for example) is disproportionately unable to participate in social institutions and benefit from their resources, then the remedy lies in changing the social structure.

Initially, this was seen in terms of providing equal opportunities for education, jobs, income, and housing. The passage of legislation to support equal opportunity was, in fact, an attempt to create structural change in the social system. It has since become clear that equality in opportunity does not necessarily result in equality of outcomes.³³ For equal opportunity to work, there must also be equal preparation, for without it there cannot be equality in the ability to take advantage of opportunities. The structural factors that have been discussed jointly determine the extent to which equal preparation, equal opportunity, and equal outcomes occur.

In the face of compelling evidence that socioeconomic disparity not only continues to exist but also appears to be growing, it is necessary to consider yet again the nature of available solutions. Structural explanations of poverty take both the individual living in

poverty and the slum in their broader social contexts, seeing them as part of, and therefore affected by, the social system in which they are situated. From this perspective it is assumed that the problem of poverty is systemic in origin. The focus then is not only on the individual part of the socioeconomic structure — the various social institutions — but also on system interconnections. Because poverty is so deeply entrenched and derives from so many parts of the system, it is beyond the capacity of any one part (including government) to develop and implement a fully effective solution. It therefore makes sense to bring together representatives from those parts of the local socioeconomic system that appear to have the greatest bearing on the future of poverty.

This means identifying the stakeholders in the situation, those who either have a lot to gain or a lot to lose, depending on whether or not the situation changes.³⁴ In this case, the stakeholders include local government, the private sector, the educational system (including colleges and universities), unions, and, most especially, the disadvantaged themselves.

The primary goal of such a group should be to achieve greater balance in minority participation at all levels of the local socioeconomic structure. Development of a coherent system of incentives aimed at integrating public and private efforts would support this goal. These incentives should be adequate to encourage the necessary structural changes in each of the sectors whose representatives make up the task group.

It is difficult to set out the precise tasks of such a group because it is up to any group of this kind to develop its own agenda, based on a mutually agreed on definition of the problem to be addressed. It is easier to forecast the types of obstacles it almost certainly will encounter. Entrenched power is a potential stumbling block. An example of entrenched power is unions, which affect both the provision of education in the public schools and access to jobs in trades such as construction. While unions originally are formed to redress serious power imbalances, it sometimes happens that they later contribute to power imbalances vis-à-vis other groups. Including representatives of teachers' and trade unions (and of all other relevant local interests) allows them to contribute to the development of solutions while still protecting the concerns of their members.

Some cooperative, cross-sectoral efforts of the sort proposed here are already under way in Boston. The Boston government has established a Jobs Residency Policy, which is intended to increase the percentage of Boston residents (including a specified proportion of minorities) who are employed in city-funded construction projects. In addition, the city's recent hiring policies have led to an increase in minority employment in government jobs. Another new approach is called Parcel-to-Parcel Linkage, in which, as a condition for building in downtown Boston, developers must provide funds for a neighborhood project elsewhere in the city.³⁵

These are examples of potentially effective efforts to arrive at a solution to local racial and economic disadvantage. Whether they work will depend in large measure on the extent to which their design and implementation reflect the needs of each of the interest groups involved. Solutions that are based on the cooperation of representatives of all the stakeholders are far more likely to receive the active support of the wider community. In the end, poverty — and economic disadvantage more generally — is a community issue and the solution must be a community solution.❧

Appendix A

Roxbury, Massachusetts, Census Tracts, 1960



Note: Numeric codes are 1980 designations.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. (June, 1983). *1980 Census of Population and Housing Census Tracts*. Boston, Mass. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. PHC80-2-98. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

City of Boston Planning Districts



Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Notes

1. *The American Heritage Dictionary*.
2. See Alan Lupo, "The Two Cities of Boston," *Boston Globe*, 17 August 1985, 19; John Camper, "Tribune Series Angers North Lawndale Leaders," *Chicago Tribune*, 27 November 1985, Section 2, 3; Hodding Carter III, "Second-to-None Coverage of the Other America," *Wall Street Journal*, 5 December 1985, 31.
3. See Colleen Cordes, "Chicago Sociologist Challenges 'Culture of Poverty' as Explanation for Plight of Inner-City Poor," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 33 (11 March 1987): 7; Bill Neikirk, "Brookings Report Cites Racial Bias," *Chicago Tribune*, 23 April 1985, Section 1, 1; William Julius Wilson, "Cycles of Deprivation and the Underclass Debate," *Social Service Review* (December 1985): 541–59.
4. See Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Stephen J. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 135–36, 145–55, 158.
5. See Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, 128–53.
6. See R. C. Longworth, "Lawndale's Lots Eerily Empty, Haunted by Economy That Died," *Chicago Tribune*, 17 November 1985, Section 1, 1.
7. While blacks and Hispanics now predominate in inner cities, whites constitute the majority of those living in poverty in the United States. See Leonard Beeghley, *Living Poorly in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1983), 19.
8. See Marshall B. Clinard, *Sociology of Deviant Behavior*, 4th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).
9. See Beeghley, *Living Poorly in America*, 117–39; Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," in *On Understanding Poverty*, ed. D. P. Moynihan (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 187–200.
10. See Beeghley, *Living Poorly in America*, 14, 111, 131, 133.
11. See Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 102–3, 224.
12. Segmented labor market theory proposes that the labor market is divided into primary and secondary sectors. The primary sector contains the desirable jobs, characterized by higher skills, good wages, and stable working conditions (low turnover, high security), and is well organized in terms of job allocation, the provision of training, and the determination of wages and paths for advancement. The primary sector is divided into two tiers. Professional and managerial jobs are in the upper tier, while blue-collar and some white-collar jobs are in the lower tier. Secondary sector jobs have minimal entry requirements, are poorly paid, are unstable, and offer little opportunity for advancement. Not only does labor market structure significantly affect individual economic outcomes, but family background and educational attainment also have much to do with where one enters and subsequently ends up in the labor market. Segmented labor market theory, then, considers the ways in which different social institutions interact and thereby affect the individual's life chances. See Suzanne Berger and Michael J. Piore, *Dualism and Discontinuity in Industrial Societies* (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1971), and Paolo Villa, *The Structuring of Labor Markets: A Comparative Analysis of the Steel and Construction Industries in Italy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
13. See Beeghley, *Living Poorly in America*, 22.
14. In 1981, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics determined that a family of four would require an income of \$15,323, which is 65% higher than the poverty line, to ensure minimum coverage of all its basic needs. Families whose income fell in the interval between \$9,287 and \$15,323, while not officially poor, would nevertheless experience substantial deprivation. See Beeghley, *Living Poorly in America*, 26.

15. For the definition of population of Spanish origin, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts*, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC80-2-98 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1983), B-3.
16. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts*, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC80-2-98, B-3, B-4, B-10.
17. See Margaret C. O'Brien and Deborah A. Oriola, *Boston at Mid-Decade: Results of the 1985 Household Survey, II: Income and Poverty*, Document No. 290, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston, May 1987, 55-62.
18. See Robert Rosenthal, Bernard Bruce, Faith Dunne, and Florence Ladd, *Different Strokes: Pathways to Maturity in the Boston Ghetto* (report to the Ford Foundation) (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976).
19. See Frank Sweetser, *The Social Ecology of Metropolitan Boston: 1950* (Boston: Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, Division of Mental Hygiene, 1961).
20. See Gregory Perkins, *Roxbury Neighborhood Profile, 1987*, Document No. 265, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston, February 1987.
21. See Rosenthal et al., *Different Strokes*, 16.
22. See Joe R. Feagin, *Ghetto Social Structure: A Survey of Black Bostonians* (San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, 1974), 13.
23. See Jonathon Kaufman, "Upscale Rental Plan Stirs Roxbury Fight," *Boston Globe*, 11 October 1985, 1.
24. See Phillip L. Clay, James E. Blackwell, et al., *The Emerging Black Community in Boston: A Report* (Boston: University of Massachusetts, Institute for the Study of Black Culture, 1985).
25. See Michael K. Frisby, "Flynn Said to Be Stung by Report on Blacks," *Boston Globe*, 6 December 1985, 19, 23; Michael K. Frisby, "City: Blacks Have Gained in Jobs, Housing, Income," *Boston Globe*, 7 December 1985, 21, 22.
26. See O'Brien and Oriola, *Boston at Mid-Decade*, 26.
27. See Charles Kenney, "The Politics of Turmoil," *Boston Sunday Globe*, 19 April 1987, 18.
28. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts*, Boston Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC80-2-98, B-4. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people of Spanish origin may be of any race.
29. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts*, Boston, Mass., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC80-2-98, Table P-15.
30. See Alexander Ganz and Gregory Perkins, "The Massachusetts Economy: The Good News and the Bad News," Document No. 305, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston, 21 October 1987, Section 1, "The Growth Record."
31. See Beeghley, *Living Poorly in America*, 120.
32. See Beeghley, *Living Poorly in America*, 149; Bowles and Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, 102.
33. See James E. Blackwell and Phillip Hart, *Cities, Suburbs, and Blacks: A Study of Concerns, Distrust and Alienation* (Bayside, NY: General Hall, 1982), 2.
34. See Ian I. Mitroff, *Stakeholders of the Organizational Mind* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983), 1-12, 18-27. Mitroff uses the concept with regard to a specific (i.e., focal) organization and those organizations and interest groups within its environment that are crucial to its functioning. The stakeholder approach, however, should be equally useful in identifying the key players in ongoing social conditions such as poverty and in bringing them together to work out mutually acceptable solutions.
35. See Kenney, "The Politics of Turmoil," 18; "New Horizons for Roxbury," Document No. 199, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston, 1986.

The Catholic Church and the Desegregation of Boston's Public Schools

James E. Glinski

Recent studies of Boston's desegregation crisis, most notably J. Anthony Lukas's Common Ground, have been highly critical of the Catholic church and its local leader, Humberto Cardinal Medeiros, archbishop of Boston. Their criticisms have been that the church, guided by the ineffective leadership of Cardinal Medeiros in an effort to save its own schools, allowed its schools to become havens for those Bostonians attempting to escape busing. This article is an account of the church's effort to develop a desegregation policy that would allow it to preserve its own schools but not at the expense of court-ordered desegregation and its attempt to implement that policy in the face of strong opposition. In assessing the success of the church's effort, this article also raises the question of what is the proper role of the church in the construction and implementation of public policy.

As a result of Judge W. Arthur Garrity's desegregation ruling in June 1974, Boston was a city marked by a struggle between citizens who supported the desegregation of Boston's public schools and those who did not. The struggle involved all of the city's institutions and their leaders, including the archdiocese of Boston.

In a city that was 70 percent Catholic, it was expected that the church would play an influential role in the effort to implement the court's order. However, the church was facing many problems of its own at that time, including an enrollment crisis in its own schools, a multimillion-dollar debt, and an adjustment to a new archbishop, Humberto Cardinal Medeiros, who had been appointed in 1970 following the death of Richard Cardinal Cushing. These problems combined to make it difficult for the church to fulfill expectations that it play a major role in Boston's attempt to desegregate its schools. This article examines the desegregation policy developed by the church and assesses its effect on the implementation of court-ordered school desegregation in Boston.

To truly understand the activities of the church during this period one must put them in the context of a long struggle by church reformers to convince the church to develop an effective policy for dealing with a changing inner city and of the paradigm of policymaking that the church had established to deal with major issues. Although the policies and

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practices of the archdiocese of Boston on social and moral issues would in large part be determined by its archbishop, they were also the result of a complicated and intricate process involving a large cast of characters, both lay and religious.

Cardinal Medeiros, like his predecessor Cardinal Cushing, would be pressured by reform-minded individuals and groups, such as the Catholic Interracial Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the Association of Boston Urban Priests, and the Association of Urban Sisters, to make the church more responsive to the changing environment of Boston. These reformers attempted to convince the archbishop to develop a cohesive urban policy, administered by an effective church agency, that could unify the efforts of the various reformers within the church. Many reformers also emphasized the role that parochial schools could play as the bridge between Boston's white and minority communities. Not surprisingly, however, these reformers encountered considerable resistance, both bureaucratic and philosophical, from the church.

The Cardinal

A complex person, Cardinal Medeiros exhibited a leadership style and personal characteristics that would be very influential in determining the effectiveness of the church during the desegregation crisis. Many of those who supported the selection of Medeiros as archbishop hoped that he would bring to Boston the same commitment to the underprivileged that he had demonstrated in his efforts for the farm workers in his diocese in Texas. In Boston a commitment to the underprivileged meant using the prestige and power of the church to help resolve the city's intensifying racial crisis.

Perhaps because they set their expectations too high or had envisioned the new archbishop to be someone he was not, his progressive supporters were concerned over Medeiros's inactivity on moral and social issues during his first year as archbishop. In contrast to Cardinal Cushing, who made his own decisions and took action, Medeiros listened to his advisers' recommendations and made carefully reasoned decisions that were often compromises between conflicting advice. In addition, Medeiros, unlike Cushing, felt that the church should not be involved in political activity. It soon became clear that Medeiros would often need to be pressured to act, sometimes with impressive results.

Under Medeiros the church continued to support the state's Racial Imbalance Act (RIA) against attempts to repeal or weaken it. Passed in 1965, this law stated that any school in Massachusetts with more than a 50 percent nonwhite enrollment was imbalanced. If a school system did not redress the imbalance the state Department of Education had the power to approve corrective measures or to impose punitive action, such as the withdrawal of state funding, until the school system complied with the law. However, two court actions would force the church and its archbishop to increase their commitment to racially balanced schools. In 1972, Federal District Judge W. Arthur Garrity began hearing preliminary motions on *Morgan v. Hennigan*,¹ the attempt by black parents to desegregate Boston's public schools. In 1973, the state Supreme Judicial Court ordered the state Department of Education to prepare a plan for the implementation of the RIA in Boston, effective September 1974.

In his public statements and writings, such as his impressive pastoral letter "Man's Cities and God's Poor," Medeiros repeated his support for the RIA and also endorsed busing as one way to break the "habit" of segregation. In response to opposition to the planned busing of public school students in the fall of 1973, he asked "every Catholic to examine his conscience as to the extent of his contribution to the present tension and frus-

tration” and repeated his position that integrated education was a moral issue and “that hatred of a brother or sister and disdain for legitimate authority and law are immoral!”² In addition, in response to pleas for an increase in his personal involvement in support of the RIA and in reaction to the massive efforts by its opponents for its repeal, on April 4, 1974, Cardinal Medeiros personally appeared before the Joint Committee on Education to voice his support for the RIA.

Some observers feel that the personal testimony of Medeiros saved the RIA. The archbishop of Boston was still the most influential religious leader in Massachusetts and there was some doubt whether other religious leaders, such as Episcopal Bishop Burgess, would have testified or would have been as effective if Cardinal Medeiros had not. In addition, in an act rare for Cardinal Medeiros, he telephoned several influential legislators to emphasize his support for the RIA.³ Action in the federal courtroom would also give the cardinal an opportunity to demonstrate his support for integration, because on June 21, 1974, Judge Garrity ordered the Boston School Committee to comply with the RIA.

Announcing his support for Garrity’s decision, Cardinal Medeiros noted that the School Committee had had nine years to comply with the law but had done nothing. He also told reporters that although “busing may not be the most desirable way to integrate,” it is “all we have right now” and is “only the beginning of the fight.”⁴ However, the biggest test of the cardinal’s support for integration would be the determination of a policy for the archdiocese’s troubled school system, which if allowed to become a haven for refugees from busing, as many Catholics wanted it to be, could have increased its enrollment at the expense of desegregation.

The Problems Facing Catholic Education in the 1970s

In 1972 Catholic schools in the United States were closing at a rate of more than one per day as enrollments dropped 18 percent over the previous three years, with a drop of 42 percent projected by 1980.⁵ The archdiocese of Boston was no exception to these trends. Its 345 schools with 153,344 students in 1964 had shrunk by 1974 to 248 schools with 81,540 students (see Table 1).⁶ Even the usually optimistic Cardinal Cushing had commented in 1970 that parochial schools would be extinct by 1980.⁷ It was little wonder that Cardinal Medeiros would give the archdiocese’s Board of Education a lot of his time.

Aside from a decrease in enrollment, a variety of other problems faced the archdiocesan schools. There was a growing lack of confidence in Catholic education resulting from the publicity given to some of the crash closings, which created fear among parents, teachers, and pastors that their school would be next. Rising maintenance and payroll expenses were beginning to cause a financial crisis for many schools. The educational budget of the archdiocese showed a \$2 million deficit for the school year 1972–73. A lack of planning hid from some parishes danger signals that, if discovered earlier, might have made it possible to take steps to keep some schools open. The diminishing number of vocations to the religious communities created multiple problems. First, many pastors thought of their schools as “sister schools” and felt that a school was not Catholic unless it was staffed by religious women. Second, many schools could not afford to remain open if they had to pay lay teachers, who necessarily received higher salaries, instead of religious.⁸

The importance of the religious communities to the schools was dramatically demonstrated in December 1972 when the two largest orders of teaching nuns in the archdio-

Table 1

**History of Enrollment in School System of
Archdiocese of Boston, 1954–1980**

Year	Number of Schools			Enrollment		
	Elementary	Secondary	Total	Elementary	Secondary	Total
1954–55	224	93	317	107,027	24,120	131,147
1955–56	227	92	319	108,957	25,090	134,047
1956–57	231	93	324	109,898	26,295	136,193
1957–58	235	94	329	111,588	27,914	139,502
1958–59	242	96	338	114,798	29,170	143,968
1959–60	243	98	341	117,768	30,205	147,973
1960–61	245	98	343	118,847	31,496	150,343
1961–62	243	99	342	118,637	32,708	151,345
1962–63	243	99	342	118,540	33,489	152,029
1963–64	245	101	346	118,876	34,297	153,173
1964–65	246	99	345	119,635	33,709	153,344
1965–66	251	99	350	118,140	33,422	151,562
1966–67	246	96	342	115,141	33,514	148,655
1967–68	245	93	338	110,216	33,521	143,737
1968–69	242	91	333	103,259	32,532	135,791
1969–70	235	86	321	93,176	31,420	124,596
1970–71	221	76	297	81,705	28,124	109,829
1971–72	210	67	277	73,999	26,596	100,595
1972–73	202	65	267	66,702	26,535	93,237
1973–74	185	60	245	58,935	25,834	84,769
1974–75*	187	61	248	55,617	25,923	81,540
1975–76	177	59	236	54,492	25,636	80,128
1976–77	177	59	236	52,263	25,246	77,509
1977–78	171	59	230	50,003	24,981	74,984
1978–79	167	58	225	47,585	24,431	72,016
1979–80	165	56	221	46,936	24,556	71,492

*First year of desegregation and mandatory busing.

cese, the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, announced that they would withdraw from dozens of schools in the archdiocese by 1975. Although these communities made their decision to stabilize the schools of the archdiocese, especially those in the inner-city parishes, their action led to the closing of eighteen schools in June 1973 and left many parents feeling bitter.⁹

Cardinal Medeiros and the archdiocesan Board of Education were not unaware of the plans of the sisters and had been formulating a policy of their own, which in part supported the decision made by the two religious communities. In a series of ten regional meetings between October 11 and November 7, 1972, the board had presented its program to the leaders of the parishes and religious communities. Included in this program were the establishment of individual boards for the parish schools and guidelines for school closings. It was also clear that other solutions and strategies were being promoted by the board, including the consolidation of schools and faculty in areas where too many schools competed with one another for students; intercommunity staffing, whereby religious from various orders would teach in the same school; the identification of certain schools as higher priorities for remaining open; and the acceptance of increased involvement of lay teachers and parental involvement in planning.¹⁰ However, those operating Catholic schools had to face the overriding question Was the amount of time, energy, and money expended to keep the schools open worth it?

The answer for most archdiocesan educators was found in the Vatican Council II philosophy, which supported the belief that the Christian must play a role in society relative to the questions of race, population, poverty, justice, and peace. The Catholic school retained its immense importance because it contributed “so substantially to fulfilling the mission of God’s people” and could “further the dialogue between the Church and the family of man,” in the words of one Vatican II document.¹¹ In 1972, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops reinforced those beliefs in a pastoral message that regarded Catholic schools as the best instrument to communicate doctrine, to build community, and to serve others. The schools should not only prepare students to make a living, the bishops said, but also teach them “how to live with one another, how to make a life.”¹²

One expression of this philosophy was the effort made by the archdiocese during these difficult times to make the survival of its inner-city schools a priority. Despite its financial problems, the archdiocese heavily subsidized the schools of parishes in the predominantly black neighborhood of Roxbury. For example, in 1973 the archdiocese contributed \$58,644, or more than 50 percent, to the \$116,169 budget of the St. Francis de Sales school in Roxbury.¹³ In addition, the archdiocese was fortunate to have several priests and nuns who dedicated themselves to aiding minorities in the inner city, sometimes spending thousands of dollars of their own personal funds to keep schools going. Many of these church activists were, however, pressing the cardinal to take a more active role in supporting minority issues, especially the racial balancing of Boston’s public schools.

The Church’s Policy

Judge Garrity’s June 1974 order to implement the first phase of the court’s desegregation plan at the beginning of the 1974–75 school year created an enormous dilemma for an archdiocese struggling to keep its schools open but at the same time attempting to remain true to its teachings on social justice and to its cardinal’s support for integration. Consistent with his consensus style of leadership and in anticipation of the court order, Cardinal Medeiros made a decision earlier in 1974 to shut the doors of parochial schools to refugees from the busing plan only after extensive consultation with his advisers.

One of the most important factors he had to consider was the strong opposition to busing by large numbers of Catholic parents. Although there were no exact figures, it was the opinion of church leaders that among those opposed to busing, the overwhelming majority were Catholics.¹⁴ How the church’s pro-busing stance would affect the receipts of the annual archdiocesan-wide stewardship appeal, the most important source of revenue to pay off the church’s \$25 million debt, was another practical consideration. The obvious fact that the Catholic schools were predominantly *de facto* segregated also caused the cardinal some difficulty in formulating his decision on busing policy. If the church supported busing, then why did it not do more to integrate its own schools? If, on the other hand, it remained silent on busing it opened itself to a charge of ducking a moral issue. In addition, the decision not to allow open enrollment in parochial schools at a time when declining enrollments were forcing the closing of many Catholic schools was questioned by a number of parents and school administrators.

Although the cardinal received input from several church officials, it appears that the major influence on his decision to support the desegregation order by not allowing open enrollment came from Patricia Goler, head of the archdiocese’s Commission on Human Rights. Goler had a long history of involvement in the church’s work in the inner city and was highly respected by church officials as deeply and unselfishly committed to minority

rights. She and state Superior Court Judge David Nelson served as the liaison between the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other inner-city organizations, such as Freedom House, and the cardinal. Goler pressured Cardinal Medeiros to testify at the State House in April 1974.¹⁵ It was clear that the cardinal's decision to support racially balanced schools was also the result of his personal convictions and his commitment to following the law even though he might have had doubts about the specifics.

Once the decision was made to support the desegregation order it was necessary for the archdiocesan Board of Education to formulate a policy that would meet with the cardinal's approval. The board needed to come up with a policy that would help the city of Boston implement the court order but at the same time preserve Catholic schools.

Competition from parochial schools had long been a central problem for Boston's public schools. Many parents were unwilling to sacrifice their children to the present Boston schools as long as parochial schools provided a better alternative and some believed that "the closing of the parochial schools would probably be the best thing that ever happened to the Boston public schools. Then the parents, who can now afford to send their children to private and parochial schools, might take a greater interest in the city system."¹⁶ Another drastic solution, aside from closing the parochial schools, would have been to include the parochial schools in the busing order. Meetings did in fact take place between representatives of the Boston Public Schools and the archdiocesan School Office to discuss the possibility of increasing minority enrollment in the Catholic schools. However, the suggestion of Catholic school representatives that an opinion be requested from the state attorney general on the availability of funds ended discussion of this option.¹⁷ The archdiocesan Board of Education was also aware that to allow open enrollment in Catholic schools would increase their enrollment by as much as 300 percent and kill the desegregation order: a tempting option that would have temporarily solved the Catholic schools' enrollment crisis and also made the church popular with the antibusing forces.

When Brother Bartholomew Varden, the archdiocesan school superintendent, began receiving calls in December 1973 and January 1974 from distraught pastors warning that people were "lining up" to enroll their children in the parish school for the upcoming school year, the Board of Education decided that it had to make a policy decision soon.¹⁸ Taking into consideration the personal beliefs of Cardinal Medeiros, the strong pressure from Goler and other representatives of the city's minority community, and the views expressed by Vatican II and the National Conference of Bishops, the board decided at its January 25, 1974, meeting not to allow the schools of the archdiocese to become havens for those trying to escape school desegregation.

On March 1, 1974, the Board of Education made public its guidelines on school imbalance. After promising its wholehearted cooperation with public officials and its support for a community effort for improved education, the board presented a five-point procedural plan governing the transfer of public school students to Catholic schools. Any applicant for transfer from public schools would not be accepted unless (1) the acceptance would improve the racial balance in the school to which the child was applying; (2) the application was due to a change in family address; (3) the family already had other children in the school; (4) the number of students accepted conformed to the average number of acceptances of previous years; and (5) the acceptance was consistent with the principles of social justice as enunciated in the official teachings of the church.¹⁹ The problem now facing the church was to get support for this policy.

Reaction to the Church Policy

When the first court order was issued by Judge Garrity in late June 1974 the church recognized the polarization it created in the community and the danger that students might become pawns in the various plans to remedy the situation. Nonetheless the archdiocese stressed compliance with the order.²⁰ Yet within the church, support for compliance with the court order and for busing in general was far from unanimous.

The Catholic Press

A review of the national Catholic press of the period reflects the diversity of positions Catholics held on this issue. Maurice DeG. Ford, in several *Commonweal* articles, defended court-ordered busing as constitutional and symbolically necessary. Other proponents of busing portrayed busing as a last resort, “not a solution itself, but a means by which the city may eventually be brought to recognize a serious problem in public education and work collectively and politically to solve it.” The editors of *America* reminded their readers that in 1972 the U.S. Catholic Conference identified the issue of race relations as a moral one that included “the right of all children to equal educational opportunity” and that “busing, while certainly not a total solution, may in some instances be a helpful and indeed necessary instrument.”²¹

The antibusing criticism of church policy by conservative Catholic writers was summarized by Philip Zucchi’s *Triumph* article in which he stated:

The Cardinal’s directive invites criticism on several counts. First, it uniformly casts upon the parents of children who are attempting to avoid forced busing the gloomy suspicion of racial bigotry. Secondly, it fails to lend support to the very real concerns of parents who think that parental jurisdiction over their children’s education supersedes that of the government, and that busing their children into high-crime districts is unsafe. Thirdly, it at least implicitly minimizes the importance of obtaining a Catholic education as opposed to a secular one. And lastly, it assures the continued decline of the Catholic school system.²²

The Catholic writer and critic Michael Novak also argued that “busing . . . was an immoral policy” that went against the “basic social principles of American life, against family, neighborhood, class, ethnic, and even educational realities” and was “unfair to working people, was supported by only a small minority of blacks and whites, and was unconstitutional.”²³ This divergence of opinion in the Catholic press was also shared by many of its readers, including the clergy of the archdiocese of Boston.

The Clergy

The clergy of the archdiocese at the time of court-ordered busing was roughly divided into three groups. One faction was a small but highly visible group of activist priests who pushed for a strong position by the church on minority issues and who felt strongly that the church could do more than it was doing to support desegregation. Many of these priests had worked and lived in the inner city and actively participated in projects to improve the plight of the city’s poor, such as Tent City and the Pine Street Inn. A second group, the majority of the clergy, were sympathetic to the conditions of the poor and supportive of efforts to improve their lives but felt, as did Cardinal Medeiros, that it was

primarily the responsibility of public institutions and officials to resolve these problems when they fell outside the sphere of moral issues. Finally, there was a group of conservative clergy who did not understand what the big rush for minority rights was all about and who opposed the church's stance on desegregation. They felt that since other groups had bided their time and eventually received equal opportunity, so should Boston's blacks and other minorities.²⁴ Further complicating matters for the church was that sometimes a single parish had priests representing all three positions. As troublesome as this division among the clergy might be, however, it was mild compared with the diverse reactions of the laity.

The Laity

Although the division of opinion among the laity resembled closely that among the clergy, the majority of the opponents to the court order were probably Catholic. Certainly the majority of the antibusing leadership — Louise Day Hicks, Raymond Flynn, Pixie Paladino, and William Bulger — were Catholic. Many Catholics felt that the church's support for the court order was further evidence that it had abandoned them. "I've been fighting with the priests in my parish because they don't represent the community," said one opponent of desegregation. "They haven't done nothing against the issue, but by the same token they haven't defended the people in their community."²⁵ Antibusing Catholics were particularly upset with the stringent antisegregation guidelines for the parochial schools. In addition to public protests, such as those outside his residence, Cardinal Medeiros also received numerous letters from angry laypeople who reminded him that many Catholic schools "were built by Catholic immigrants for the express purpose of providing an alternative to public school education" and that "these schools are there today not for [the] priests or bishops but for Catholic children."²⁶

Much of the opposition to the church's school policy focused on the rights of parents over their children. ROAR (Restore Our Alien Rights) and other antibusing groups were especially fond of quoting the following statement from Vatican II:

Parents, who have the first and the inalienable duty and right to educate their children, should enjoy true freedom in their choice of schools. Consequently, public authority, which has the obligation to oversee and defend the liberties of citizens, ought to see to it, out of a concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are allocated in such a way that, when selecting schools for their children, parents are genuinely free to follow their consciences.²⁷

Many Catholics also found it hard to support church leaders who told them to oppose abortion laws even though they were the law of the land but to support busing because it was the law of the land.

The opposition to the church's desegregation policies by working-class whites in neighborhoods such as South Boston, Hyde Park, and Charlestown created for Cardinal Medeiros a dilemma that contributed to his inability to reach an understanding with these people. The cardinal felt deeply the problems and pain of the poor. He understood that many of the people of South Boston and similar neighborhoods were the "employed poor," people who worked hard but remained relatively poor. He understood that these people could not afford to move to a suburb or to send their children to private schools to escape their problems. He also believed that these people got a "raw deal" and were the victims of decisions in which they had no say. This was especially true when it became clear that the court order would not involve communities in the surrounding area in Bos-

ton's busing plan.²⁸ However, two other beliefs of the cardinal would prevent him from giving the opponents of desegregation his support.

The first was his strongly held belief in obeying the law. In many letters he wrote to people who criticized his position on the court order, the cardinal stated: "I am fully aware of the opposition of a great many people to the Federal court order which resulted in forced busing. My efforts continue to be bent toward making a positive contribution to helping those people who are directly affected by the decision. I must act, however, in accordance with the law, and I must help them do the same."²⁹ The second was his strong commitment to the minority communities of the inner city, who appeared to be supporting busing as a last resort to end segregation in Boston. In short, Medeiros, although he understood the suffering of the working-class people of South Boston, Hyde Park, and Charlestown, was not willing to oppose a federal court order or to withdraw his support for a major objective of the city's minority community.

Other obstacles also prevented the cardinal from reaching an understanding with Boston's opponents to the church's desegregation policy. One of these was the cardinal's ethnicity. From the moment he arrived in Boston, Medeiros, a Portuguese-American, was met with resentment among many Bostonians who could not accept an archbishop who was neither a Bostonian nor, perhaps more important, Irish. As Boston School Committee member John Kerrigan bluntly put it, "I think it would be better if Medeiros wasn't from Texas and spoke English. . . . He just doesn't know Boston."³⁰

This problem was compounded by a lack of understanding among the cardinal's advisers of the feelings in Boston's white working-class neighborhoods. Almost all the cardinal's top advisers on social issues and education — Father John Boles, Father Michael Groden, Brother Varden, Patricia Goler — were outsiders or people who had spent much of their time in the inner city rather than the surrounding white working-class neighborhoods. Although John Kerrigan's analysis that the situation was the result of "flaming-ass liberals who are giving advice to a holy man who doesn't know the practicalities of the situation"³¹ was a bit harsh, it does explain the cardinal's remarks at a 1974 news conference that he was "a bit surprised" with the opposition to forced busing and "frankly did not expect this strong opposition."³²

The Effectiveness of Church Policy

Despite such strong opposition, when busing was implemented in September 1974 the church's policy was clear: it would support the court order by closing the doors of its schools to refugees from busing. However, the strong opposition to this policy, the lack of a cohesive urban policy and an effective church agency to implement it, and the autonomy of local pastors would make it difficult for the church to successfully implement its policy.

Both opponents and supporters of the church's desegregation policy were critical of its initial implementation. Parent groups in white working-class neighborhoods believed that the policy violated the natural right of Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools. Desegregation supporters, citing newspaper reports based on interviews with students and teachers at Catholic schools, believed that many Boston public school students had managed to transfer to Catholic schools. Afraid that such transfers would only resegregate Boston's schools, they accused church officials of strengthening the Catholic school system at the expense of court-ordered desegregation. However, the vehement protests of parents unable to enroll their children in Catholic schools and the enrollment figures of archdiocesan schools made their fears appear exaggerated.

The archdiocesan School Office kept a close eye on the enrollments of parochial schools within the city for several reasons: it was sensitive to charges that it was taking advantage of busing to save its own schools; it was getting daily calls from Boston school officials checking on missing students; and it was scheduled to testify at Civil Rights Commission hearings in June 1975. In the fall of 1974, Father Boles, the archdiocesan director of education, compiled enrollment figures for the schools within the city and compared enrollment figures for the beginning of the school year 1973–74 with those for 1974–75, the first year of busing. What Boles discovered was that instead of an increase in enrollment in parochial schools in the city of Boston, there had been a decrease of 908 students in the first year of desegregation, 1974–75 (see Table 2).³³ There were at most four schools in the city that were apparent violators of archdiocesan policy (see Table 3).³⁴ The question was, however, where all the archdiocesan students and the thousands who were leaving Boston's public schools were going.

Although the majority of the archdiocese's schools followed its enrollment policies, enrollments of several schools bordering Boston had significant increases (see Table 3). Schools that had noticeable increases in enrollment, such as Mt. Alvernia Academy in Newton (+101), St. Mary's in Brookline (+52), St. Catherine's in Norwood (+59), and Sacred Heart in Weymouth (+88), clearly benefited from busing. It was clear that during the first year of busing, students fleeing busing found some refuge in the parochial schools bordering the city. One should remember, however, that increases in enrollments were possible to achieve without violating archdiocesan policy. While the policy asked schools to be strict about transfer students, it did not place restrictions on students entering at the normal entry points, the first and ninth grades, since there was no way of identifying the motives of those who were enrolling. In addition, the girls in many families were already attending a parochial school, and with a little extra sacrifice enough money was raised to send the boys to the same school.³⁵ This did not violate archdiocesan policy, which allowed students who had brothers or sisters in a school to transfer to that school. As Dr. Louis Perullo, director of attendance for the Boston Public Schools, noted, there was also not much the archdiocese could do about families who used suburban addresses as a ploy to gain admittance to a parochial school.³⁶

In response to enrollment increases during the first year of desegregation, the archdiocesan Board of Education attempted to tighten its transfer policy by keeping a closer eye on suburban schools. However, it also allowed schools to accept transfers to replace students who had dropped out or transferred to other schools. There was concern that this new policy was easily subject to abuse or misinterpretation. For example, a school now had the right to fill a vacancy, but was it a vacancy from last year or five years ago? Indeed, this new transfer policy and the implementation of phase II of busing (in school year 1975–76), which increased the number of citizens affected by busing, did lead to an increase in the number of schools that opened their doors to students escaping busing, most significantly in Boston.

Although the total population of archdiocesan schools decreased 1,412 from 1974–75 to 1975–76 (see Table 1), in the city of Boston a dozen archdiocesan schools had significant increases in enrollment (see Table 3), and total enrollment for Boston's parochial schools increased by 28 students. This increase was achieved by admitting 1,207 transfer students from Boston's public schools, mostly into grades 2 through 6 (see Table 2), which would imply that parents were attempting to protect younger children from the perceived dangers of being bused to schools in unfamiliar neighborhoods. However, because schools were allowed to replace dropouts or transfers, which numbered 1,209, and

Table 2

**Archdiocese of Boston School Enrollment by Grade,
1973–1976**

City of Boston

Elementary	1973–74	1974–75	1975–76
Grade K	406	486	475
1	1,810	1,839	1,906
2	1,896	1,773	1,866
3	2,031	1,866	1,911
4	2,079	1,970	1,957
5	2,204	2,009	2,051
6	2,123	2,188	2,093
7	1,812	2,072	2,075
8	2,353	1,719	2,028
Ungraded	0	132	48
Total	16,813	16,051	16,410
Secondary	1973–74	1974–75	1975–76
Grade 9	2,345	2,250	1,988
10	2,304	2,336	2,218
11	2,244	2,143	2,274
12	2,120	2,139	2,057
Ungraded	1	0	0
Total	9,014	8,868	8,537
Total, All Grades	25,827	24,919	24,947

Outside of Boston

Elementary	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76
Grade K	1,767	2,157	2,270
1	4,143	3,953	3,920
2	4,204	4,153	3,954
3	4,751	4,218	4,224
4	4,994	4,698	4,260
5	5,311	4,866	4,670
6	5,497	5,266	4,906
7	5,177	4,788	4,614
8	5,257	5,002	4,619
Ungraded	827	465	645
Total	42,122	39,566	38,082
Secondary	1973–74	1974–75	1975–76
Grade 7	261	244	281
8	309	263	253
9	4,456	4,622	4,417
10	4,124	4,139	4,419
11	4,124	3,973	3,894
12	3,765	3,813	3,835
Ungraded	3	1	0
Total	16,820	17,055	17,099
Total, All Grades	58,942	56,621	55,181

Table 3

**Enrollment of Archdiocesan Schools with
Significant Increases in Enrollment or Transfers,
1973-1977**

School	1973-74	1974-75 (Phase I)	1975-76 (Phase II)	1976-77
Boston, Elementary				
1. St. Brigid, South Boston	315 (-46)*	297 (-18)	347 (+50)	353 (+6)
2. St. Anthony, North End	292 (-26)	266 (-26)	290 (+24)	279 (-11)
3. St. John, North End	281 (+24)	273 (-8)	293 (+20)	285 (-8)
4. St. Anthony, Allston	401 (-6)	376 (-25)	416 (+40)	388 (-28)
5. Our Lady of Presentation, Brighton	477 (-49)	455 (-22)	528 (+73)	496 (-32)
6. St. Lazarus, East Boston	250 (+10)	248 (-2)	282 (+34)	282
7. St. Mary, East Boston	264 (-39)	251 (-13)	270 (+19)	269 (-1)
8. St. Francis de Sales, Roxbury	115 (-56)	132 (+17)	149 (+17)	142 (-7)
9. St. Peter, South Boston	258 (+18)	257 (-1)	285 (+28)	282 (-3)
10. Holy Name, West Roxbury	751 (+11)	713 (-38)	768 (+55)	771 (+3)
Boston, Secondary				
11. Cardinal Cushing, South Boston	586 (-124)	595 (+9)	595	535 (-60)
12. St. Dominic Savio, East Boston	349 (-8)	345 (-4)	382 (+37)	423 (+40)
13. Boston College High, Dorchester	1103 (-4)	1145 (+42)	1177 (+32)	1258 (+81)
14. Don Bosco, Boston	931 (+89)	983 (+52)	926 (-57)	823 (-103)
Outside of Boston, Elementary				
1. St. James, Arlington	213 (+23)	213	228 (+15)	230 (+2)
2. St. Francis of Assisi, Braintree	317 (-62)	268 (-49)	296 (+28)	248 (-48)
3. St. Mary, Brookline	420 (-54)	472 (+52)	486 (+14)	491 (+5)
4. St. Rose, Chelsea	463 (-13)	495 (+32)	478 (-17)	458 (-20)
5. St. Stanislaus, Chelsea	180 (-4)	171 (-9)	245 (+74)	237 (-8)
6. Our Lady, Everett	244 (-22)	244	241 (-3)	218 (-23)
7. St. Anthony, Everett	250 (+48)	304 (+54)	340 (+36)	312 (-28)
8. Cheverus, Malden	321 (-16)	339 (+18)	338 (-1)	310 (-28)
9. Immaculate Conception, Malden	534 (-71)	501 (-33)	563 (+62)	502 (-61)
10. St. Joseph, Needham	428 (+57)	411 (-17)	467 (+56)	427 (-40)
11. Mt. Alvernia Academy, Newton	202 (-8)	303 (+101)	302 (-1)	295 (-7)
12. Newton Catholic, Newton	424 (+47)	388 (-36)	433 (+45)	393 (-40)
13. St. John, Newton	173 (-8)	146 (-27)	171 (+25)	156 (-15)
14. St. Catherine, Norwood	704 (-105)	763 (+59)	828 (+65)	803 (-25)
15. St. Mary, Quincy	259 (-18)	276 (+17)	275 (-1)	257 (-10)
16. St. Joseph, Quincy	215 (-18)	198 (-17)	219 (+18)	234 (+15)
17. Little Flower, Somerville	404 (-23)	401 (-3)	489 (+88)	434 (-55)
18. St. Ann, Somerville	369 (-82)	336 (-33)	381 (+45)	365 (-16)
19. St. Anthony, Somerville	231 (-17)	207 (-24)	248 (+41)	241 (-7)
20. St. Polycarp, Somerville	228 (-16)	225 (-3)	254 (+29)	246 (-8)
21. Blessed Sacrament, Walpole	402 (+12)	389 (-13)	423 (+34)	421 (-2)
22. Rosary Academy, Watertown	132 (-57)	167 (+35)	235 (+68)	202 (-33)
23. St. Patrick, Watertown	315 (-27)	262 (-53)	300 (+38)	288 (-12)
24. St. John, Wellesley	137 (-10)	138 (+1)	159 (+21)	158 (-1)
25. St. Paul, Wellesley	194 (-20)	219 (+25)	237 (+18)	243 (+6)
26. Sacred Heart, Weymouth	536 (+11)	569 (+33)	568 (-1)	557 (-11)
Outside of Boston, Secondary				
27. St. Mary, Brookline	330 (+20)	359 (+29)	339 (-20)	311 (-28)
28. Matignon, Cambridge	608 (-19)	631 (+23)	674 (+43)	683 (+9)
29. North Cambridge Catholic, Cambridge	230 (-32)	252 (+22)	242 (-10)	236 (-6)
30. Ursuline Academy, Dedham	340 (-1)	358 (+18)	385 (+27)	391 (+6)
31. Academy of Notre Dame, Hingham	305 (+36)	319 (+14)	387 (+68)	403 (+16)
32. Immaculate Conception, Malden	230 (+8)	246 (+16)	266 (+20)	253 (-13)
33. Sacred Heart, Weymouth	283 (+39)	338 (+55)	376 (+38)	376

* Figures in parentheses are differences in enrollment from the previous school year.

to accept minority students, who composed 20 percent of the transfers from Boston's public schools, most schools had adhered closely to archdiocesan policy.³⁷ In schools outside of the city, there was a total decrease of 1,440 students between 1974 and 1975. However, as many as 25 schools in Boston's near suburbs experienced significant enrollment increases, which also appeared to come in large part from Boston transfers, perhaps as many as 1,100.³⁸ Yet, there were 181 archdiocesan schools in Boston and its near suburbs and in 1974-75 only 16, or 8.8 percent, appeared to take advantage of busing to enhance their enrollments significantly. Although the number of schools in Boston and its near suburbs with significant increases in enrollments rose to 35, or 19.3 percent, in 1975-76, it appeared that adherence to archdiocesan policy, rather than avoidance, was the norm.

However, there were enough violations of the transfer policy to warrant Cardinal Medeiros's sending a letter to several schools informing them of their violation and ordering them to cease. The fact that Medeiros could not take any punitive action underscored one of the major problems he faced in attempting to implement his desegregation policy: the independence of the parishes. As Medeiros told the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, each of Boston's parishes was autonomous and he had "no coercive powers, only moral powers" over them.³⁹

The number of obvious violations of school policy decreased dramatically in 1976, with many schools losing a significant number of students (see Table 3), and the figures for 1976 showed a continuing decrease in archdiocesan enrollments, with a total loss of 2,619 students (see Table 1). The new archdiocesan school superintendent, Father Eugene Sullivan, also noted a decline in applications for transfers compared with the previous years during busing, an indication that the issue was dying.⁴⁰

Although there was no doubt that a few schools did stabilize their enrollments by accepting transfers from Boston's public schools and that there was some underreporting of the number of Boston residents by suburban parochial schools, other significant factors led to a stabilization of parochial school enrollments.⁴¹ These factors included an increase in professional planning, which made clearer the responsibilities of the various educational agencies of the archdiocese; the acceptance that schools could be staffed mostly by lay teachers and remain Catholic; and the increasing affluence of Catholics, which made them better able to support schools with lay staffs. Many schools also launched aggressive enrollment campaigns, which in several instances led to significant increases in enrollment. The most successful example, Central Catholic High School in Lawrence (unaffected by the Boston situation), increased its enrollment by 161 students between 1973 and 1975. Several school closings increased the enrollments of neighboring schools, since close to 50 percent of students affected by the closings transferred to other Catholic schools.⁴² Before, during, and after the court-ordered desegregation of Boston's public schools, the number one priority of Catholic educators was to keep their schools open. By 1976 their efforts appeared to be showing positive results.

The degree of adherence to the church's school policy was of the utmost importance to the success or failure of the desegregation of Boston's public schools. Much of the criticism of mandatory busing focused on its potential to cause white flight from the beleaguered schools, which would only result in the resegregation of the cities. An important element in white flight was the extent of pupil transfers to private schools during the first years of desegregation.

In Boston the potential for white flight was quite high because many of the ingredients for it were present: a large, urban public school district with a significant proportion of

minority students (42 percent), a high proportion of Catholics among the white population, overwhelmingly white suburban school districts, a desegregation plan limited to the central city, a significant proportion of white students assigned to the busing program, and an archdiocesan school system in the midst of a ten-year period of decline.⁴³ It is, however, very difficult to determine the exact effect that parochial schools had on the implementation of school desegregation in Boston because of the questionable accuracy of enrollment and transfer figures, especially for the Boston public schools.

While it can be determined that from 1974 to 1976 close to 2,500 white students transferred to parochial schools from Boston's public schools, it is impossible to get an accurate figure of the total number of white students who left the Boston public schools during the first three years of busing. Official figures indicate a loss of 9,929 white students from 1974 to 1976. But some of those closely involved in the desegregation process maintain that enrollment figures prior to 1975 were inflated and that the loss of white students may have been as low as 5,000.⁴⁴ In other words, Boston's parochial schools absorbed between 25 and 50 percent of the white students who fled busing. A recent study of white residents in a sample of Boston neighborhoods who withdrew their children from Boston's public schools because of busing found that 55 percent transferred their children to parochial schools and remained residents of Boston, while 45 percent moved to the suburbs to escape busing.⁴⁵ While these figures would tend to support the position that Catholic schools absorbed a high percentage of white students fleeing busing, they also imply that parochial schools were retardants to residential relocation.

The Church and Desegregation

Aside from enrollment and transfer policies, archdiocesan school officials and church activists were also concerned about the lack of minority students and teachers in parochial schools, which in 1974–75 had 4,029 minority students or 4.9 percent of their total enrollment.⁴⁶ It was very difficult for the church not to appear hypocritical in its support for the desegregation of Boston's public schools if its own schools were *de facto* segregated. Accordingly, in February 1975, the archdiocesan Board of Education launched a campaign to explore the possibility of further integrating parochial schools. As part of this campaign, Superintendent Varden sent a survey to all archdiocesan schools in an attempt to discover where there were empty seats, how much it would cost to fill them with minority students, and, by requiring the signature of both the pastor and principal, where there was support for such an effort. Although archdiocesan schools were far from integrated, some notable successes, such as St. Gregory's in Dorchester, resulted from this effort.

Ironically, the church's support for black community parish schools in Roxbury created a potentially embarrassing situation. These schools attracted black students from all areas of the city, were close to 100 percent nonwhite, and fostered a black nationalist philosophy that opposed integration. In January 1976, Patricia Goler warned Father Boles that the existence of such schools was "an apparent dichotomy of the cardinal's support for integrated public schools" and could be used against the cardinal if it became public knowledge. She also suggested that "carrots" be offered to black schools to encourage them to integrate.⁴⁷ At the time, Father Boles decided to maintain the status quo and gamble, correctly as it turned out, that this would not become an issue.

It was, however, not clear at the time of busing whether Catholic schools should be integrated if they were not already. Several black community leaders, such as state Representative Melvin King, supported an increase in the number of black students attending

Catholic schools. Others, however, were asking questions such as Were Catholic schools inherently unequal if they were segregated? Was the best way to serve the black community through the integration of Catholic schools, most of which had few black students who were Catholic and most of which were located in the inner city? Would the meager integration of Catholic schools, because of the small number of black students in them, take away blacks' control of their own future and destiny? Rather than waste energy attempting to integrate schools artificially, it seemed more fruitful to expend energy to demonstrate that an all-black school could be as fine as any other school of high quality.

The church, faced with a variety of external and internal pressures, achieved mixed results in its attempt to implement its transfer policy and to integrate its schools. There is no doubt that some diocesan schools took advantage of court-ordered desegregation to stabilize their enrollments and that there was not much Cardinal Medeiros or other church officials could do to stop them. It was also true that archdiocesan schools remained segregated, not only because there had never been a sincere effort to desegregate them but also because there was no consensus in the minority community or the church hierarchy that integrated Catholic schools were desirable.

On the other hand, the large majority of Catholic schools adhered to the church's transfer policy. It was, one could argue, surprising and laudable that so many schools resisted temptation and supported the policy, despite intense criticism of the policy within their church communities, their own enrollment problems, and the reality that the cardinal could not force them to do so. Although the church was devoted to keeping Catholic schools open, it would not be at the expense of the effort to desegregate Boston's public schools. It is clear that recent studies of Boston's desegregation crisis, including J. Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground*, which have criticized the church for allowing its schools to become havens for those Bostonians attempting to escape busing, have been oversimplifications of a very complex picture.

The Church's Failure to Play a Major Role

Many people involved in the process of desegregating Boston's schools expected that the church would play a larger role in the process. An examination of the reasons why it did not requires a discussion both of the manner in which the church makes and implements its policy decisions and of the role the church can realistically be expected to play in implementing major public policy.

Simply stated, the major reason the church would not be a major player in achieving the desegregation of Boston's schools, before or after court-ordered busing, was that it was unable to develop a coordinated and consistent urban policy.⁴⁸ The absence of an effective urban policy was caused in large part by the church's inability to make its social teachings appreciated as fundamental. If the teachings of the church on social justice had been taught and received, the problems caused by desegregation would not have been as great.

Some of the blame for the church's failure to convey its message on social justice must fall on Cardinal Medeiros. While he should be commended for his concern for the poor and his belief in racial, social, and economic justice, Medeiros was simply unable to get his views across to many who needed to learn from his teachings. Burdened with the misfortune of having to succeed the extremely popular Cardinal Cushing, Medeiros was also, because of his ethnic background, a victim of racism. Yet Cardinal Medeiros was to become in some observers' opinions the minorities' cardinal and may have been able to use his support among minority groups as a power base.⁴⁹ However, his consensus style of

leadership, in combination with the policymaking structure of the church, would most likely have made it impossible for him to use this power base effectively even if he knew how to do so.

One of Medeiros's major goals was to reorganize the archdiocesan government by introducing a cabinet system that would divide the administration of the archdiocese into offices headed by directors. He was, however, unable to overcome the strong resistance to his plan by the bishops and was able to create only an Office of Education. While it is uncertain that any archbishop could accomplish such far-reaching change, Medeiros's consensus style of leadership was the primary reason for his failure to reorganize the archdiocese. This meant that the church would face the desegregation issue with the same highly centralized policymaking structure and highly decentralized policy-implementation structure it had used for decades. Medeiros was therefore severely hampered by the decentralization structure, in which local priests had significant power to decide how to implement official diocesan policy or whether to implement it at all.⁵⁰

If the large majority of the archdiocese's clergy and religious had been in agreement with Cardinal Medeiros's position on desegregation, the autonomy of the parishes would not have been a major obstacle to the implementation of his policy. However, with a church divided in its support for desegregation, it was impossible to achieve the consensus that Medeiros felt he needed to make and implement major policy decisions.

One could also criticize the church and Medeiros for their political inactivity. During the attempt to implement the court orders, the political campaigns of many local politicians centered on their antibusing stance as a way to win office. Influenced by the belief of Medeiros and his advisers that it was not the role of the church to get involved in politics, the church remained silent instead of supporting those candidates who reflected its own position on desegregation and opposing those who did not. The sincerity of this position was also subject to some doubt considering the political involvement of the church in other issues it opposed, such as birth control and abortion. Many church members felt that the cardinal's plea for the support of busing because it was the law of the land, at the same time he asked them not to support abortion even though it was the law of the land, did not make sense.

The Church and Public Policy

The recent efforts to desegregate Boston's public housing have once again raised questions about the proper role the church should play in controversial public issues and the ability of its current archbishop, Bernard Cardinal Law, to implement church policy. Yet, while there are numerous similarities in the church's actions today and during the busing crisis, there are also some signs of change within the church that may make it more effective in dealing with social issues now.

Similar to the expectations surrounding the arrival of Medeiros, expectations were high when Law was appointed that he would begin a new and healing chapter in Boston's troubled history of race relations. Also similar has been the disappointment expressed by activists who would like to see Cardinal Law play a more active role to foster understanding and unity on racial issues. Like Cardinal Medeiros, Law has, in his public statements and through the archdiocesan weekly newspaper, *The Pilot*, made his position on the issue clear. He believes that public housing must be made accessible to all and that the question is not whether Boston's housing projects should be integrated but how that should be achieved.⁵¹ Law is also receiving harsh criticism from some political leaders and laity in

South Boston, although not on the scale Medeiros experienced during the busing crisis. Law is also finding that some of the pastors in South Boston are not in complete agreement with his position on the housing issue. However, there are some indications that Law has the benefit of leading a church that has, since the busing crisis, improved its ability to deal with urban issues.

Cardinal Law recently made the far-reaching decision to establish the Office of Black Catholics to recognize and nurture this minority and immigrant groups, which have often been neglected by the church. And although the effectiveness of this office and the Black Catholic Advisory Committee in giving minorities an important voice in church policy on issues that affect them cannot yet be determined, the establishment of these organizations appears to have accomplished one of the long-standing goals of church activists.

In another action, which supports the belief stated by longtime church activist Father Walter Waldron that "when we engage in anything that improves race relations we don't have to look over our shoulders . . . to question if we're going too far,"⁵² Cardinal Law recently named the Rev. Roberto Gonzales as the first Hispanic bishop of the archdiocese of Boston. Gonzales's appointment was the result of a study of the Hispanic apostolate of the archdiocese, which has recommended, among other suggestions, that the church appoint a full-time director for Hispanic ministry to coordinate the efforts of other archdiocesan offices that deal with Hispanic issues. It appears that after decades of neglect the archdiocese of Boston is adjusting to the changing city that it serves.

It is clear, however, from court-ordered busing, recent plans to desegregate Boston's public housing, and other major public policy decisions that the church has little if any voice in the formation and implementation of policy and that perhaps Cardinal Medeiros was correct in his belief that the proper role of the church is not a political one, but a moral one. If this is in fact the case, judgments about the effectiveness of the church in dealing with major social issues should be made not on secular standards but on spiritual ones; and perhaps the most effective role the church can play in Boston is to build "bridges" that foster understanding and unity among all its diverse peoples, something it was unable to do during Boston's school desegregation crisis. 🍌

Notes

1. *Morgan v. Hennigan*, 379 F. Supp. 410 (D. Mass. 1974), *aff'd sub nom. Morgan v. Kerrigan*, 509 F.2d 580 (1st Cir. 1974), *cert. denied*, 421 U.S. 963 (1975).
2. "Cardinal's Statement on Schools," *The Pilot*, 23 November 1973, 14.
3. Interview, 1 July 1987, with Dr. Patricia A. Goler, chairwoman of the Commission on Human Rights, 1971–1976, and former member of archdiocesan Board of Education.
4. Nick King and John B. Wood, "Cardinal Says Garrity Ruling Fulfills His Hopes," *Boston Globe*, 1 July 1974, 4.
5. Rhoda Goldstein, "Enrollment: Facts and Forecast," *Momentum* 8, no. 2 (May 1977): 4; Rev. Francis J. Rimkus, "The Future of the Archdiocesan School System," *The Pilot*, 19 August 1972, Back-to-School section, 2.
6. James T. Hannon, "The Influence of Catholic Schools on the Desegregation of Public School Systems: A Case Study of White Flight in Boston," *Population Research and Policy Review* 3 (1984): 221.
7. John Deedy, "News and Views," *Commonweal* (6 December 1974): 226.

8. Directives to Central High Schools, Director of Education file, 1972–1973, Archives of the Archdiocese of Boston (AABo).
9. Rev. John Boles to School Board, April 30, 1973, and May 7, 1973, Director of Education file, 1972–1973, AABo.
10. Interview, 31 July 1986, with Brother Bartholomew Varden, C.F.X., Superintendent of Schools, 1972–1976; Rimkus, 2.
11. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 643.
12. "School Policies," *The Pilot*, 4 March 1974, 4; Varden interview.
13. 1973 budget review, St. Francis de Sales, Roxbury, parish file, AABo.
14. Kay Longcope, "The Cardinal and Desegregation," *Boston Evening Globe*, 9 July 1974, 29.
15. Goler interview.
16. Michael True, "The Last Resort in Boston," *Commonweal* (25 October 1974): 77.
17. Minutes of Board of Education meeting, 3 March 1975, Boston School Integration Problems file, AABo.
18. Varden interview.
19. "Board of Education Publishes Guidelines on School Imbalance," *The Pilot*, 1 March 1974, 1.
20. "The Court's Order," *The Pilot*, 28 June 1974, 4.
21. Maurice DeG. Ford, "Busing in Boston," *Commonweal* (10 October 1975): 456–60; John C. Cort, "Black and White in Boston," *Commonweal* (31 January 1975): 355–57; "Busing Is Part of the Answer," *America* (24 January 1976): 45.
22. Philip F. Zucchi, "South Boston: What Hath Busing Wrought?" *Triumph* (December 1974): 12.
23. James Carroll, "Busing and Novak," *National Catholic Reporter* (5 September 1975): 13; Michael Novak, "Busing: Immoral?" *National Catholic Reporter* (26 September 1975): 16.
24. Interview, 13 August 1986, with Msgr. Francis J. Lally, one of Cardinal Cushing's closest aides and late member of the U.S. Catholic Conference.
25. Rick Casey, "Boston Order Splits Catholics," *National Catholic Reporter* (21 February 1975): 1.
26. Antibusing letter to Humberto Cardinal Medeiros, 20 September 1975, Busing file, AABo.
27. Mock criminal complaint against Cardinal Medeiros by ROAR, 2 February 1976, Desegregation Boston Schools file, AABo.
28. Interview, 6 August 1986, with Rev. John Boles, Director of Education, 1972–1976.
29. Cardinal Medeiros in response to antibusing letter, 20 September 1975, Busing file, AABo.
30. Casey, 6.
31. Casey, 6.
32. "Cardinal Backs Principles in Racial Balance Plan"; and Lally interview. Lally believed Medeiros was not given good advice on how to handle South Boston and, according to Dr. Goler, made two trips from Washington, D.C., to meet with Goler and Medeiros to discuss church desegregation policy.
33. Figures in Table 2 are taken from summaries of the annual survey done by the Boston archdiocese for the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA). My thanks to School Office statistician Diane Ferrick for making them available. One can get some indication of the number of transfers to Catholic schools by comparing enrollments in each grade with those of the grade below it for the preceding year.
34. Figures in Table 3 are also from the annual NCEA survey. There are three ways to identify schools that took advantage of busing to enhance their enrollments. One, used by the archdiocese, was a

- 5 percent increase in enrollment over a one-year period. A second method is to identify schools that had large increases in a specific class from one year to the next. For example, although the enrollment of Cardinal Cushing High School increased by only 9 students in 1974, the tenth grade class had 22 more students than the previous year's ninth grade, the eleventh grade an additional 21. A third indicator is a large decrease in enrollment the year after a sudden increase, which most likely resulted from students dropping out after using the parochial school as a temporary haven from busing.
35. Varden interview. According to Varden, in 1973, 42 percent of families with a student enrolled in a parochial school also had a child in public school.
 36. Tom Sheehan, "Parochial Schools: Who's Transferring — and to Where?" *Boston Phoenix*, 14 October 1975, 32.
 37. "Catholic Schools Adhere to Enrollment Guidelines," *The Pilot*, 11 November 1975, 1, 8. In this article Varden cited figures that would put the number of transfers from Boston public schools to archdiocesan schools for 1975 at 2,258. Deducting approximately 250 minority transfer students, this would put the number of white transfer students at 2,000.
 38. Hannon, 228. Hannon, in contrast to Varden, estimated that the number of white transfers from Boston public schools for both 1974 and 1975 was 2,000. Since there appear to have been close to 500 transfers in 1974 alone and the archdiocese cited transfers of close to 2,000 for 1975, it would appear that close to 2,500 white students transferred from Boston's public schools to archdiocesan schools in 1974 and 1975.
 39. Arthur Jones, "Clergymen Promise to Take Greater Role in Desegregation," *Boston Globe*, 18 June 1975, 8.
 40. "School Statistics for 1976–77 Show General Decrease," *The Pilot*, 3 December 1976, 1.
 41. Goldstein, 4. A study done by the NCEA in 1977 found that the rate of decline in Catholic school enrollment nationwide had slowed to 0.9 percent in 1976–77. The stabilization of enrollments in many schools of the Boston archdiocese was, in part, a reflection of this nationwide trend.
 42. "Conference Examines Future Role and Needs of Schools," *The Pilot*, 21 November 1975, 8; Boles interview; Varden interview; Joseph Berger, "Being Catholic in America," *New York Times Magazine* (23 August 1987): 64.
 43. Hannon, 220–21.
 44. Christine H. Rossell, "Boston's Desegregation and White Flight," *Integrated Education* (January/February 1977): 36–39. Rossell notes that court-appointed expert Robert Dentler maintained that enrollment was inflated prior to 1975 and that the loss in that year may be mainly due to the difference between inflated enrollment in the prior year and real enrollment in 1975.
 45. Christine H. Rossell, "Desegregation Plans, Racial Isolation, White Flight, and Community Response," in Christine H. Rossell & Willis D. Hawley, eds., *The Consequences of School Desegregation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 24.
 46. Bro. Bartholomew Varden, C.F.X., to Colleagues, 28 February 1975, Superintendent of Schools file, 1972–1975, AABo.
 47. Boles interview.
 48. For an in-depth analysis of the reasons behind the church's failure to develop an urban policy in the 1960s and 1970s, see James E. Gliniski, "Church in Crisis: The Role of the Archdiocese of Boston in the Effort to Desegregate Boston's Schools," unpublished master's thesis, University of Massachusetts, Boston, December 1987.
 49. Interview, 20 August 1987, with Rev. Walter J. Waldron, pastor of St. Patrick's, Roxbury, and veteran church activist. Father Waldron observed that Medeiros's wake and funeral were better attended than Cardinal Cushing's and especially noticeable was the large number of minorities, who were almost nonexistent at Cushing's wake and funeral.

50. Laura Shana Kohl, "The Response of the Catholic Church to the Desegregation of Boston Public Schools 1973-76," unpublished undergraduate thesis, Harvard University, 1986, AABO.
51. James L. Franklin, "Catholic Paper Gives Flynn Some Backing on BHA Plan," *Boston Globe*, 2 July 1988, 19.
52. Joanne Ball, "Cardinal 'Emerging' on Racial Issues," *Boston Globe*, 22 May 1988, 1, 11.

Refugee in New England

James C. Thomson, Jr.

Early last spring I confided to Raymond, our Cape Cod caretaker for the past twenty-two years, that my wife and I would probably be selling our Truro house in the autumn. This ageless town father (permanent Fire Chief, Rescue Squad captain, trash collector, and problem-solver) — whose grandfather once owned the rugged ocean-side pasture land which developers now sell for over a hundred thousand per acre — shook his grizzled head in disbelief. “Jesus,” he said, “and I thought you folks were natives by now.”

Natives. I stood there silent for a while after he pulled away in his pickup, gazing into the pines and listening to the distant surf. *Natives.* The word, the accolade, slowly sank into me. That made us Truro people, Outer Cape people rooted in the first place the Pilgrims had tried going ashore.

Was it possible that this rootless wanderer “et ux” (as the town tax bills refer to my wife) had quite inadvertently become New Englanders?

New England? I don’t recall mention of any such place back in Nanking, China, where I grew up in the 1930s. For me, America had seemed simply one shimmering golden blur. I knew it had Princeton, New Jersey, where I had been born on furlough in 1931, before I was whisked back to China by my educational-missionary parents. (This meant I could someday be president, unlike my China-born brother and sisters.) I knew it had New Brunswick, New Jersey, where Great-Aunts Annie and Emma lived, in a big old house with an ever-flowering garden where my mother grew up. (I had endless conversations with both aunts on the unconnected telephone in the den off our living room.) I knew it had Middlebush, New Jersey, where Grandpa Thomson, who looked a lot like God, was a Dutch Reformed minister. I knew it had Uncle Dick’s farm in a part of New Jersey called New York State, where my father had spent his boyhood summers with cows and blueberry bushes and bears. And I knew for a fact that unlike China, America was a country so clean that you could pick pennies off the sidewalk and put them in your mouth.

But about New England I knew virtually nothing. There was, as I think about it, one fleeting exception. My mother, who felt she had moved somewhat downward on the social scale when she married a nonconformist village preacher’s son, had a subtle way of reminding us periodically that she was descended from Captain Seabury, out of Porlock in

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Cornwall, who had arrived in Plymouth on the *Mayflower* and married a daughter of John and Priscilla Alden. Such a sustaining truth or legend should have given me some sense of New England rooting. But it seems I never doubted that Captain Seabury, upon disembarking, took the first available coach to New Brunswick. I should add that this ancestor from Porlock was later to become as elusive as Coleridge's visitor; for in the 1950s my mother spent many hours poring through the ancient baptismal records of that Cornish parish in a vain attempt to find anyone ca. 1600 who bore the name of Seabury.

So it was that when my Nanking idyll came to an abrupt end in mid-1937, thanks to the Japanese invasion, I confidently expected that our exodus from our summer house in mountainous Kuling meant a long boat ride to my fabled New Jersey. Instead, we ended up on a trainload of foreign refugees destined for Hong Kong, where hundreds of us lived for two months on camp cots in the once sumptuous public rooms of the Peninsular Hotel. And the boat, once we found one, took us only to teeming Shanghai, where the authorities of the nicely campused Shanghai American School packed us into rooms otherwise intended for boarding students. There my mother and I lived out of suitcases for a year and a half while my father ingeniously commuted between Japanese-occupied Nanking and the far western reaches of China where his university-in-exile had relocated.

By December 1939, with the war becoming worldwide, my mother and I embarked at last on the long-anticipated boat trip across the Pacific to the land of my birth, where my three much older siblings were off at college. What a shock it was, some weeks later, to end up in a grim factory town called Wallingford, Connecticut, north of New Haven.

I should explain that Wallingford made some sense to my distracted mother, whose biochemist husband was still off in Asia helping to ferry medical supplies into Free China. Wallingford was where Uncle Sam and Aunt Mary, old China missionary friends, were teaching at Choate School, and they had kindly found us half a house for a cheap rent.

But for me at eight, no stranger or more formidably unwelcoming place ever existed than the Grade 3 classroom of the North Main Street Elementary School in Wallingford that frigid January. Back in Nanking I had long grown accustomed to being considered an oddity by my contemporaries — from my Chinese playmates, to the rickshaw men's children who lived in huts outside our walled garden, to the peddlers of fried breads and spun sweets — in fact, to the entire population of insatiably curious but genial onlookers everywhere I went. We foreigners were exotic and hilarious, with our pink skin, big noses, funny-colored eyes, and general hairiness. In China I felt special, different, but appreciated.

Not so at the North Main Street School. That first day the well-meaning teacher had announced a new boy's recent arrival from China. At recess I was surrounded. "You can tell he's a Chinaman," said one sallow Italian. "Yeah," said some other swarthy ethnic, "those frigging slanty eyes." "Hey, speakee Chineese, Chink," demanded a third. I murmured, "Please, couldn't we be friends?" Those words drew hoots and jeers. They all agreed the accent was Chinese. But then, before they could beat me up, I agreeably began to say things in Chinese. I called them little foreign devils and turtle's eggs ("bastards" in Chinese) but claimed that I was saying "How are you" and "Happy Birthday." Slowly, respect began to seep in. An uncomfortable scene; from that time on, I knew that I was different and rootless in America.

Now according to both tradition and the map, southern Connecticut is part of New England. Yet back then, and to this day, I would dispute it. Wallingford, and its even seamier neighbor Meriden (where I went to see *Gone With the Wind*, my first movie, that winter), are backwaters of New Haven. And New Haven is not really New England. It's a satellite of New York City. By June 1940 I had still no sense of a place called New England, but all

that was shortly to change. For that June my mother announced that the five of us, including my siblings, were taking off for some watering spot in western Massachusetts where our globe-trotting father would soon join us for that extreme rarity, a family reunion.

That summer it was Mrs. Livingston W. Cleveland who first introduced me to the flinty grandeur of the New England Dowager, a personage recurrent in my ensuing odyssey. She was the duchess of what seemed to me, at age nine, a magical country estate in the hamlet of Lithia, Massachusetts, two miles west of Goshen in the lower Berkshires.

Mrs. Cleveland — the redoubtable widow of two, some said three, eminent Congregational ministers — greeted her disparate guests with warm hauteur, saying she hoped they would be comfortable and (by unmistakable implication) tidy. It was she who presided over the long trestle head table at all our communal meals in the establishment's gabled clapboard manor house. Once she had regally swept to her seat (with bustles, it seemed to me, though that cannot be true), she would signify to a college-student waitress the particular blessing to be sung — the Doxology, or "O Give Thanks," or some brighter tune like "In My Heart There Rings a Melody," often sung in rounds and even with descants — and her quavering but clear contralto voice would lead us all. After the blessing, she would add her wintry smile to the ritual applause that greeted, as a not so gentle admonition, each guest who scuttled into the hall late. Punctuality was central to her regimen.

Actually, Mrs. Cleveland wasn't a New Englander at all, but spoke in the elegance of upper-class Old England. This made her even more formidable, though the rumor in my set was that she had first come to America sixty years before as a nanny in some clergyman's household and had soon moved from Downstairs to Upstairs.

"Mountain Rest," Mrs. Cleveland's duchy, was a summer colony for retirees as well as overseas Protestant missionaries on furlough, founded by the Congregational Church headquarters in Boston around the turn of the century. The seventy or so guests, who sought the coolness of the hills for varying periods of vacation, ranged in age from babies to the very old but vigorous. (Hardiness was also central to the regimen, and missionary habits seemed to sustain vigor well into the twilight years.) Some guests were annual repeaters, single women long retired from decades of teaching, nursing, or evangelism in Africa, Asia, India, the Levant. Others were whole families on home leave from remote places and, from time to time, large multigenerational families holding reunions.

For me, Mountain Rest began with a long and gritty train ride up the Connecticut River valley in the oppressive heat of June. At Northampton we were met by the Carleton student from India who drove the colony's antique wooden-sided station wagon, redolent of old leather and exhaust fumes but never tobacco. The road west seemed up and ever up, gradually cooler, winding through Florence, Haydenville, and Williamsburg and then steeply ascending to the summit at Goshen where narrow rich farmland suddenly spread below us as we dipped down to Lithia. Everyone's ears popped just before the Whale Inn.

On that first trip our fellow passenger, the Reverend Mr. Vokel, a fundamentalist Presbyterian from Korea who saw Satan in every possible pleasure including the cinema, was apoplectic that Northampton's movie theatre was named the "Calvin"; his association was Genevan rather than presidential, and the fact that Calvin Coolidge had been mayor of the college town did not keep him from fulminating for the rest of the summer.

Fundamentalists were one of the hazards of Mountain Rest for us liberals who were taught to believe in good works rather than evangelism. The fundamentalists forbade their children to join in even such juvenile card games as Rook, Old Maid, Pit. They would glower at the edges of our makeshift Saturday night square dances in the old barn (the

liberal Miss Sims, lately of Uganda, played a wicked “Turkey in the Straw” for the Virginia reels) to be sure none of their offspring got too close to a partner. And they never ceased denouncing my hero, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, for repealing the Eighteenth Amendment, thereby turning the nation into a giant gin mill.

Another hazard in those early summers was the super-patriots. The colony was infused, of course, with Christian (or at least Protestant) one-world belief that all men are brothers. The Mountain Rest Cheer, which cannot be intelligibly reproduced here, included words from nine far-flung languages. But every morning, after post-breakfast prayers in the parlour and calisthenics on the front lawn (where the octogenarian Dr. Scudder of India excelled in Jumping Jacks), all guests would attend the raising of the flag while solemnly intoning the Pledge of Allegiance. Many of these veteran sojourners abroad seemed to love Old Glory in a way that would bring tears to the eyes of George Bush.

The daily embarrassment for me, in 1940, was that my two college-age sisters, who were going through a Quaker pacifist phase, conspicuously refused to join in a pledge that reeked of nationalism; my sisters stood there silent with arms folded stolidly across their beautiful breasts. While the old folks bristled and my playmates whispered and tittered, I would blush and shout too loud the words I had only just learned in public school that spring. My own patriotism was questionable since three years before I had been daily honoring the Chinese Nationalist flag, listening to the reading of Sun Yat-sen’s will, and bowing three times before the portrait of the Founding President in a Nanking kindergarten.

Such hazards aside, being at Mountain Rest was a giddy adventure. Few missionaries could afford cars, and virtually all missionaries were trekkers exploring their territories back in their rugged fields of service. As a result, each fair day’s centerpiece was a huge hike, not organized but entirely spontaneous. People simply set forth in all directions, from the colony’s clapboard cottages, covering much of Hampshire County by foot in the months of the summer.

The locals found such behavior odd. “Why you folks *do* this?” the roadstand lady who sold us root beers always asked as our ragtag band sweated its way two miles uphill to Goshen. “Because *we like* to walk,” my mother would reply in a way that suggested the questioner was indolent. At the Whale Inn, our regular destination on these shorter strolls, the two very ample Smith alumnae who ran the place would look welcoming but resigned to the fact that their profits from the usual iced teas and lemonades would be paltry considering the mess we left behind. Once my father was on the scene, however, chocolate éclairs, ice cream sundaes, and strawberry shortcake for everybody made the proprietors more cheerful. On the really fine days we would swim at the lake in the D.A.R. State Forest and then wolf down tinned Vienna sausages and fried-egg sandwiches that the women had cooked over the picnic fire.

Sometimes I went on the longer walks as well, though my preference was to spend those days down by the deep pool in the stream my father had dammed. My parents liked to average ten miles or more a day (and did so into their seventies when a double-decker London bus ran over my mother and neatly “de-treaded” her foot). Those longer walks took us to Swift River and Cummington, where Mother liked to check in at the William Cullen Bryant homestead and wistfully talked about someday buying a farm. There were hikes past the beaver dam to Spruce Corner on the Ashfield road where a little old lady sold wild blackberry and raspberry preserves. If I was good and didn’t whine too much, I was allowed to dip fingers in the jars on the way home. When the going got really tough, my father would miraculously produce chocolate bars and wedges of Gruyère cheese wrapped in tinfoil. His British Army canteen was always full of cold spring water (we

could never figure out how and where he had filled it). Sometimes my sturdy brother would carry me on his shoulders for a while, as he had done for years back in China.

And then there was the super-long walk — for which we sometimes cheated and took the Mountain Rest station wagon part way — to Chesterfield Gorge. There was an ancient and ferocious bearded man near the gorge, a hermit they said, who did beautiful wood carving — napkin rings and bowls and gnarled figures and whistles. The gorge was dark and cold and scary. On Chesterfield Gorge days I usually went to the brook pool or played tennis on the bumpy dirt court.

Outside our cosmopolitan enclave on the Lithia hilltop, most locals we encountered were vendors and innkeepers. A big exception, however, was Farmer Barrus. Farmer Barrus's forebears must have come over with Captain Seabury, for the family had apparently lived in Hampshire County since time immemorial. Unlike other colonists who had the sense to move to New York State, Ohio, and points west, they had stayed on trying to scratch a living out of that hopelessly rocky soil. In the process they had become pillars of Church and Commonwealth, and the current patriarch was both a state senator (Republican, of course) and the presiding elder of the Goshen Congregational Church. Decades before, when times were better, some Barrus had donated the land for Mountain Rest. So our boundary adjoined the Barrus pastures, and the trail walk through the woods to Barrus View for the sunset was an obligatory post-dinner constitutional, right after the obligatory newscast from Lowell Thomas on the parlour radio.

It was from visits to the Barrus farm at milking time that I first learned about rural New England. The working Barruses, in their twenties, were taciturn, devoid of small talk. There was seldom a greeting in the dim-lit cow barn, and I would lurk shyly in the shadows for a while. Then, "Can I pet the calf?" "Yup." "Can I put my fingers in its mouth?" "Yup." "Will it bite me?" "Not likely." (Oh, the bliss of a calf sucking on my fingers!) Then, "Are you going to milk this cow next?" "Yup." "Can I try doing it?" "Nope." It was from some Barrus that I first heard the local weather described as "Nine months winter, three months damned cold weather" — and ran home to tell my mother, who thought it funny but didn't like *that* word. (The strongest expletive my father ever used was "Great Scot!" and very occasionally "Pshaw!" — which I never heard or saw anywhere else except in some comic strip.) The Barruses had a henhouse that smelled really terrible, but Mountain Rest got its share of the fresh eggs. There were work horses, too — very large, old, and sagging. Their property was generally a mess — unpainted dilapidated buildings and rusting abandoned machines. Indeed, these dour farmers seemed to me about as poor as the rickshaw families outside our Nanking back gate, and a lot less cheerful. But the word among the grown-ups was that Grandpa Barrus had stashed away lots of money.

Lithia locals I came to know better were the postmistress and her husband. In those days the village did have a Post Office, though absolutely nothing else, and it occupied one room in the small farmhouse at the foot of Mountain Rest's hill. The lady was a Barrus relative of some sort and made her husband do the boring stuff. The dark old quarters smelled of pipe tobacco and wood smoke from the pot-bellied stove. As Mrs. Cleveland got to like me, she allowed me to bring down the outgoing mail and pick up the delivery. After a while the postmistress would let me ink up the round rubber stamper with the wooden stem and assault the letters with a postmark. In his travels my father had started me on a stamp collection, opening me up to faraway lands from Abyssinia and Afghanistan to Zanzibar and Zululand. To actually play postmaster with mail addressed to such places by the Mountain Rest denizens was a heady experience.

By early September, Mrs. Cleveland, who had decided that my mother was a fellow patrician, offered the whole Thomson family the use of the station wagon, together with the Carleton driver, for a day-long foliage tour of something called the Mohawk Trail — from Lithia up to Greenfield and then along Route 2 to Williamstown and beyond. At the summit of Mt. Greylock I decided that New England had at least one mountain worth mentioning — something like Kuling in the massif of central China, where we spent our summers before the Japanese spoiled everything. But Greylock was lacking in Buddhist temples, sacred ginkgo trees, Taoist shrines, and views of the brown Yangtze as Poyang Lake's blue-green waters swirled into it. I was somewhat more taken with the roadside Indian teepees and souvenirs since my father's family tree was said to include Prince Henry of the Mohawks and a handful of brave Palatinate forebears who had died at the Battle of Oriskany in the French and Indian Wars. On the drive home I threw up. Cars were new to me, and the Carleton boy had to stop at five-mile intervals for my stomach and head to settle. That night we missed not only the ritual applause for being late but dinner itself. Nonetheless, like a cat cautiously widening its turf in a new place, I had tasted a bit more of New England. It had been a nice place to visit, but China was still home.

That autumn we moved out of Wallingford and shifted our base southward by degrees — first, for two years, to an apartment on Morningside Heights in New York City and then to missionary housing in Princeton, New Jersey, in the same building we'd lived in at the time of my birth. New Jersey at last, the reader may say. Well, yes. But it really wasn't at all like the place of my Nanking daydreams. There was the drive across the Hackensack Meadows, to begin with; the rural environs of Nanking, draped regularly in nightsoil, smelled pleasant by contrast. The train ride to Princeton Junction, and especially the "dinkie" to Princeton, had its charms. But there was no denying that Elizabeth, Rahway, Metuchen, and the others were a downer; and New Brunswick wasn't much better ever since Rutgers University had turned my mother's manorial house, a flat-top on Bleeker Place, into a gloomy shell of classrooms. (Mother wept and wouldn't set foot inside.) Princeton itself was lovely, a joy for a teenager with a bicycle; but the rowdy undergraduates, confident that they owned the place, made me feel an outsider. At the Garden and Playhouse cinemas their hoots and catcalls drowned out the movies. Meanwhile, my father was shortly off to China again; my mother decided that my grades at the public school were too high, and I should go somewhere I would be "challenged"; and away I was sent, in September 1943, as a day-boy commuter at the Lawrenceville School, five miles down the road to Trenton.

There was thus a sizable hiatus in my probing of New England. My older sister had bought an abandoned farm in upstate New York as a surprise for her new husband, who was off at war; and we spent parts of the next few summers there trying to resurrect it. To be sure, we also returned for portions of each summer to the simple pleasures of Mountain Rest — "the most innocent place on earth," in the words of my mother. But these were the war years, before and after Pearl Harbor, and nothing much changed in our old routines. There were more spouseless mothers, for the men tended to stay at their overseas posts and work in refugee relief. And the college boys of draft age had all but disappeared. A few more cars, perhaps; but with gasoline tightly rationed, we stuck to our hiking ways. One winter the aged Mrs. Cleveland drifted off in her sleep. But her daughter, Mrs. Perkins, previously a sourpuss under her mother's autocratic rule, blossomed overnight

and ascended to the throne with astonishing Yankee grace. After that things loosened up quickly; I even sometimes smelled beer on the breath of older boys returning from dances up in Goshen.

In the summer of 1945 New England grew larger for me. My sister Sydney, courted by an Amherst man now studying for the Navy chaplaincy at Union Theological Seminary, got herself a job as an *au pair* to those eminent Union gurus, Reinhold and Ursula Niebuhr, at their country home in Heath, Massachusetts, on the border of Vermont. And to Heath I came for one splendid week in July. It was there that I first encountered my second New England Dowager, the formidable Mrs. Edward Staples Drown, widow this time of two Episcopal clergymen-professors. But I also encountered much more.

Heath, west of Greenfield and a steep two miles above Charlemont, was the summer hideaway of Protestant divines. There was Angus Dun, Bishop of Washington, D.C.; there was William Appleton Lawrence, Bishop of western Massachusetts; there was Dean James Pike, eventually to become Bishop of northern California; there were the two Niebuhrs, each of whom deserved a bishopric. And there were many more, theology professors and seminarians. Among the latter was my sister's boyfriend, who had hired out as a temporary farmhand with a local dairyman in order to press his suit between milkings and haymaking. The atmosphere for me was so religiously bracing that on the day I found myself in Bishop Dun's pool with Niebuhr and two other wearers of the purple, I decided that my swim had constituted adult baptism.

"Reinie," as Niebuhr was affectionately known to one and all, hardly belongs in my story line since he was a Midwesterner transplanted to New York. But I cannot mention him without saying that his respectful attention to the questions of a thirteen-year-old that week left me filled with affectionate awe for him, in particular, and for great theologians in general. We talked for literally hours about his friends Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, about Harry Truman and the Potsdam Declaration, about the concept of "unconditional surrender" for Japan (he didn't like it), and about the future of the world after peace. He talked to me as if I were a grown-up. I was not all that precocious; his rare knack was to make a young boy feel so. Long after he died in 1971 there were times when I would have given anything to be able to pick up the telephone and ask Reinhold Niebuhr's advice.

As for Mrs. Drown: she was without doubt the reigning sovereign of Heath. It is hard, in retrospect, to say exactly why. But back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she lived in a house at the center of the Episcopal Theological School, this gaunt, imperious woman, her thin grey hair escaping from its bun, had captured and captivated two generations of aspiring divinity students, who learned fast to come to tea or Sunday dinner when summoned; and as these tutees in Brahmin manners and Anglican gossip ascended in the church hierarchy, Mrs. Drown's clout ascended with them. In Heath, clergy and laity, farmers and gentlemen-farmers alike, were compelled to respond with alacrity to Mrs. Drown's beck and call. She was, as I think about it, a better-hearted version of Trollope's Mrs. Proudie; but since she had no Dr. Proudie, Bishop of Barset, to push around, she pushed everyone else. She seemed to know everyone who mattered, and she had an uncanny memory for people and connections. A decade later, when I met her again in Cambridge, she said, "Of course. You're Sydney's little brother. In Heath you talked a bit too much." And once, in a snowstorm, when I drove the now very old, arthritic, and nearly blind Mrs. Drown to Massachusetts General Hospital, she asked, "Jimmy, where are we now?" "On Storrow Drive," I replied. "Oh yes," she said. "I knew him well."

Towards the end of those Princeton years in the damp flatlands of New Jersey, I had two

further exposures to New England, one intensely bovine, the second intensely musical. In 1946 my mother reluctantly decided that my father back in postwar China needed her surveillance more than I did, so I became a boarding student at Lawrenceville. Summers got arranged by relatives, and in the first instance the Heath connection produced a one-month job offer from the same farmer who had previously employed my sister's suitor. The wages were unspecified, and I was too polite to ask.

I suspect that the whole deal was a reluctant favor to someone. Although chubby daughter Pearl Landstrom had greeted me warmly at the Greenfield railroad station, Farmer Landstrom was bleak and monosyllabic that evening when he got back from chores and said almost nothing for the rest of the month. The Landstrom parents were Grant Wood people — he gaunt and defeated, she gaunt and anxious. Daughter Pearl, in her twenties, mothered me and laughed at my jokes. But it was teenaged Ruth, voluptuous and sultry, who filled me with a mysterious yearning. Alas, Ruth had eyes only for another — the older hired boy, probably the only one Farmer Landstrom had intended to employ, a good-looking, muscular rustic who artfully shifted the blame to me whenever things went wrong.

I was not cut out to be a farmer. The hours disagreed with my long-established habits; early rising was not my thing, and even my mother, who rose with the birds, had accommodated to this odd child who seemed to do his best work at night. I also suffered from terrible hay fever — normally brought on by ragweed in August but in this instance simply and appropriately brought on by hay. (My hay fever disappeared forever when I got married.) Furthermore, I know of no smell as toxic to my system as a predawn nightful of hot, fresh cow manure in an unaired barn. Chinese nightsoil was fragrant by comparison.

At the end of that month Farmer Landstrom deposited me at the Greenfield station, shook my hand, gave me an envelope, and, uttering more words in succession than ever before, said, “Reckon y’understand it ain’t been a good season.” I learned my first lesson in contract negotiations when I opened that envelope on the train and found, as the entirety of my wages, a ten-dollar bill.

In the spring and summer of 1947 something happened that subtly affected my unspoken search for roots. When I look back I see two moments when something inside me said, “Here I might like to live.” It happened in two places: in the village of Cotuit, on Cape Cod, and on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. And it had never happened before anywhere else but Nanking.

It had a lot to do, I think, with the magic of a huge, raucous Brunhilde I had come to adore named Lillian M. Paige. Miss Paige was my piano teacher and most favorite grown-up. Since Nanking, where I had adored both Victrola records and Sophie Liu, my beautiful young piano teacher, my mother had suspected I might be a prodigy in music (as, she believed, in most other things). A succession of good teachers had humored her along, and my imitative efforts at composing (a bit of Haydn here, a bit of Mozart there, and now some Handel) had caught the attention of Miss Paige. A peripatetic Bostonian who offered weekly lessons in New York and Princeton as well, she had swept into my life in the war years and for a while found my composing itch promising.

As my schoolboy interests turned increasingly to journalism and history, it was Miss Paige who urged in the spring of 1947 that I give music one last chance. She arranged that I spend that summer season at Tanglewood in the Berkshires, immersed in professionals and their cacophony, and see if I had the temperament for a lifetime of musical commitment. I was apprenticed to one great man, Julius Herford, sat at the feet of many others (Aaron Copland, Robert Shaw, young Leonard Bernstein), attended nonstop rehearsals and performances, and earned my keep as a stagehand and sandwich-maker. In the late

evenings we hangers-on would mix in the local roadhouses with illustrious performers, absorbing musical lore and sipping Tom Collinses.

If Mountain Rest had embodied innocence, Tanglewood breathed passion, sophistication, and brilliance. Ego was everywhere, fiercely disciplined by art. In the younger people the ego was raw. In the older ones — many of them European Jews who had known much suffering — it was tempered with sadness, kindness, and the wisdom I had felt in Niebuhr. I came to revere especially the conductors, both choral and orchestral, who had to forge beauty out of anarchy. Part of me yearned to become a conductor. But it was only part of me; and what I learned intuitively that summer was that, in music, partial commitment is nothing. I learned that music was not my way. I could never have made that decision without total immersion at Tanglewood, and I never regretted it.

On the final day of the season, one of my volatile Lenox housemates, Mr. Bedetti, the Boston Symphony's first cellist, was heard to scream, "NO MORE *MUSIC!*" as he packed up his bags. I entirely agreed.

Right after Tanglewood, Miss Paige summoned me down for a week at her cottage on Cape Cod. On the drive from Providence to Cotuit the car rocked with her peals of laughter as I recited my encounters with everyone from the awesome Koussevitsky to lesser showmen and some musicians who prey on young men. By the time we reached the sandy pine groves of the Upper Cape, we had neatly relegated music to the status of avocation and could proceed with seashore living. We swam, we walked the beaches, we feasted on mussels, clams, and lobsters. Most of all I remember breathing that Cape air, sharp and musty with sand, salt, and pine pitch. Her other houseguest was the pianist George Copeland, the great interpreter of Debussy, who possessed as well a comic spirit. Copeland forced marvelous sounds from the old upright while Lillian and I sat by the fire. When he tired, all three of us played boisterous games of Hearts well into the night. It was bliss; I found myself curling and stretching my toes like an ecstatic cat.

When it was time to go home, Miss Paige insisted on driving me to Boston where I was to take a train to New Jersey. I knew very little about Boston, except that my favorite Lawrenceville teacher had gone to Harvard. It was where people talked like Miss Paige, with loud expressive voices, very broad *A*'s, and *R*'s that came and went unexpectedly. It was very cultural, with the Boston Symphony and a museum famous for Chinese art. I knew, from my mother, the rhyme about the Lowells, the Cabots, and God. Boston also had Mrs. Cleveland and Mrs. Drown, and probably a lot more just like them. And, of course, it had History — I was no longer a complete Nanking ninny, and I did know quite a bit about the Revolutionary War (much of it from Kenneth Roberts's novels). I also associated Boston with mediocre food since my mother, deprived of Chinese servants, had learned cooking late in life from the *Fanny Farmer Boston Cooking School Cookbook*. (She usually added soy sauce.)

So I was ready for a quaint and highbrow, if poorly provisioned, city. What I remember is my astonishment at the broad tree-decked boulevard, with its stately buildings — lower Commonwealth Avenue, close to the Public Garden — where Miss Paige lived. Her "studio" was an elegant, high-ceilinged apartment with chandeliers and two baby grand pianos. She even had an Old World houseman, the courtly Riccardo Tramontano, who greeted us with bows and a flourish. Riccardo, it turned out, was a learned expert and collector of the sixteenth-century epic poet Torquato Tasso. In later years, when Lillian was dead and I visited Riccardo in his family's Sorrento hotel (which was built on Tasso's house), I belatedly realized that he had been considerably more than a houseman. But those two days in Boston I decided that Miss Paige was a noblewoman, with retinue, in a

truly noble city. When we went to Mrs. Jack Gardner's Museum (as Lillian called it), I conjured up images of Lillian Paige holding sway over that castle for a great soiree in which she played the piano by candlelight.

At the Lawrenceville commencement in June 1948, where I walked off with a hefty share of prizes, I was repeatedly announced as "James Claude Thomson Jr. of Nanking, China," causing ripples of surprise among the assembled throng of parents.

I hadn't laid eyes on Nanking in ten years. I had not seen my father in four years, my mother in two. So the Presbyterian Mission Board authorized one last round-trip for me to China, Yale unprecedentedly granted me a one-year deferment of admission, and away I went to home, in the company of my best friend from school. Our arrival in China coincided with the climax of the Chinese Civil War.

My Nanking house and garden — my Eden — were grey and battered by the long years of warfare. As our horse-carriage pulled up to the gate, the new collection of servants, lined up in their white jackets, tried to make things festive by exploding strings of fire-crackers in honor of the Young Master's return. Everything was recognizable, but smaller — especially the columns of the front portico that had once seemed as vast as the Parthenon.

It was home, but different. And within four months we were forced to flee again on a U.S. Navy LSM that took us downriver to Shanghai, where we lived out of suitcases in the Navy YMCA. We were refugees once more, and Nanking was gone forever.

There comes a time in life when transience is not only reality but also a state of mind. It surrounds the college and postgraduate years and then the early phases of a career search. We have no roots and perceive no need for them.

My rootlessness had deeper sources in the uprooting of my earlier years. As a result of the latest Nanking expulsion, I felt myself more rootless than I would have in the ordinary course of things.

There were, for instance, the four years at Yale. I loved college and did well there. But Yale was full of very rich people, many of them from Greenwich and Hartford and their environs. I, a nomad on full scholarship as usual, was in but not of the place. Yale, though in the thrall of New York, was always looking anxiously over its shoulder towards Harvard.

At Cambridge, England, I studied for two more years on yet another scholarship. In England you didn't have to be a China-boy to feel tolerated but excluded; all Americans were oddities to be politely suffered. The civility was overwhelming, the coldness palpable. Mind you, I had a marvelous time there, too, though I sped to the human warmth of the Continent at every possible opportunity.

And finally there were the graduate years at Harvard on the wasteland road to a Ph.D. degree in Chinese history. Here I was at last in the smug epicenter of New England, but on the edge, looking in from a run-down multisex boarding house crammed with Californians, New York Jews, con men, and an occasional Latvian.

Sometimes the gentry let me in for a tribal rite. Brahmin acquaintances needed extra men for the traditional Waltz Evenings at the Copley Plaza. Cambridge matrons needed presentable escorts to their Boston Symphony boxes. One of my old teachers took me to the Tavern Club. Mrs. Alfred North Whitehead, bedridden in her nineties, got my name from one of her husband's Yale disciples and had me read to her over hot chocolate. Mrs. Drown decreed me an honorary student of divinity, which meant lots of teas and Sunday luncheons. The matriarch of Louisburg Square had me to dinner once. She excoriated me

in front of the others for lighting a cigarette before she poured her late husband's dessert wine. The wine, to my delight, had turned to vinegar. As for Miss Paige, her great heart had finally stopped; I spent many Sundays walking her stately avenue.

There is no place more conscious of distinctions between the permanent and the transient than Cambridge, Massachusetts. All my really close friends seemed to leave. I knew then it was only a way station — and still feel so today although I have lived here now for nineteen years in my Cambridge house, and my Harvard chair for twenty-five years of service sits in the entrance hall.

Those graduate years brought one great change. One day in the cooperative kitchen of our Irving Street house I met the love of my life, a very beautiful young divorcée, a poet. Our first date was a Waltz Evening to which Brahmin friends forced her to invite me as her escort. The child of Bohemian New York writers, she was as rootless as I, although her mother's forebears (as she frequently reminded me) had come on the first boat of Puritans to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, *far* outclassing Captain Seabury. On her adored father's side she was Irish — and was careful to announce it at dinner parties before the conversation turned to the inevitable vicious Irish-bashing. Four years later we got married and went off to Washington to perfect the world with the help of John F. Kennedy.

Twice, during the early Cambridge years, I ventured down to Cape Cod. One time I visited Orleans friends who had long ago fled from West Cummington in the Berkshires and now seldom crossed the Cape Cod Canal lest they be stranded on the mainland. Once my girl and I spent a July weekend with two bachelor professors in a lovely rented house on Wellfleet's Gull Pond, one hundred yards from the Atlantic. (She was apoplectic that their *délicatesse* forced her to lodge apart in a local inn; that was still the 1950s.) Down the road from Wellfleet stretched the Outer Cape to Provincetown's Land's End, and from the ocean side, except for the bulge of the earth, one might have seen the Azores. Once again, as with Lillian Paige in Cotuit, I felt a rare sense of peace.

It was in the summer of 1966, as I was preparing to flee the Vietnam calamity and the Lyndon Johnson National Security Council staff, that we learned of a house for rent in the Truro woods on the Cape. Harvard had beckoned me back to teach history, and I had by then despaired of changing from within a policy of national suicide.

That, I now see, was the start of it all. The pine-scented quietude of our Truro hilltop, with a crescent-moon glimpse of the ocean, began to work its healing. One day we saw the children of two psychiatrists playing Scrabble on the beach; the one word on the board was TRUST. And one day we went sea-clamming with our Washington psychiatrist who had thought us both grandiose. As we waded out of the bay, hand in hand with a basket of clams between us, like God, he looked on his creation and saw that it was good.

The summer people were welcoming, though somewhat too competitive in socializing and artsiness for our evolving taste. In time it was the local people we came to like and trust — Raymond the caretaker, Jack the postmaster, Eddie the carpenter, Bob the plumber, Bryan the well-digger, even Ellie, the sharp-tongued boss of Schoonie's general store.

Five years later we bought that Truro house, newly winterized, and started coming down from Cambridge in the fall, winter, and spring as well as the summer. Curiously enough, the beginning and end of those weekends caused me agony. It was all my wife could do to calm my anxiety as we packed up our bags and boxes for the two-hour drive each way. One day I had the insight: I was still the small-boy refugee, leaving Kuling for the Hong Kong camp cots, leaving China for Wallingford, leaving Nanking again for the Shanghai YMCA, eternally on the move. The cat was still a stray, and no place was home.

Very slowly things changed. The house, with its spectacular walk through the National Seashore to the ocean's high dunes, became a haven for our two children. My wife, the writer and teacher, became a preserver — tomatoes, jellies, pickles, chutneys, and, every year, wild beach plum jam. She also became an expert mycologist, scouring the woods to classify and to find edible mushrooms I rarely dared to sample. Some seasons we rented a piano, and I played some of the music George Copeland had played for Lillian and me in Cotuit. I also began to write — about China policy, the Vietnam War, and my Nanking childhood. Gradually my tantrums about the drive to and from the Cape began to recede. I was not being expelled; I was maybe just going home.

Since last spring, when we decided to sell the house, I have thought a lot about Raymond's words: "I thought you folks were natives by now." *Natives*, he had said.

Why sell a house when you have found your roots? Maybe that is exactly why. Once you have roots, you can go anywhere on earth and still know where you come from. 🐼

Recent Trends in the Economic Status of Boston's Aged:

Determinants and Policy Implications

William H. Crown

The economic status of the older population has improved significantly since the early 1970s. Yet poverty rates among certain groups of elderly, especially older minorities, have declined very little. To understand the reasons for these seemingly contradictory trends, changes in the income composition of the elderly in Boston are compared to changes in income for the elderly in the United States. This analysis suggests that low-income older persons were largely bypassed by one of the major factors in income growth among the older population — growth in pension income.

Despite the persistence of poverty among significant segments of the older population, it does not appear likely that federal programs for the aged poor will be expanded in the near future (given the current political environment engendered by large federal deficits). If this is the case, it suggests an increased role for state and local policy initiatives to improve the economic status of the aged poor. The number of such state and local policy options is limited, however. Employment programs might be helpful for improving the incomes of some older persons, but labor force participation rates among the aged poor are already very high. Many of the remaining elderly in poverty have health limitations or lack the necessary job skills for employment, even if training were more readily available. The most promising option for improving the cash incomes of the elderly living in poverty is to increase the state supplementation of SSI benefits, especially for older persons living alone.

It is now widely recognized that the per capita incomes of older persons rose substantially during the 1970s and early 1980s and are now similar to those for the general population.¹ For example, in 1970, the real median income of families headed by an elderly person (defined here to be a person aged 65 or older) was \$12,965 (in 1983 dollars); by 1983, it had increased to \$16,862.² This increase in the real income of older persons was largely the result of liberalizations in Social Security benefits legislated in the 1970s. In addition, a growing segment of the labor force became eligible during the 1970s to receive private pension benefits. This was the delayed result of private pension plan expansion during the 1950s and 1960s.

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Unfortunately, the real incomes of persons under age 65 did not fare as well as those of older persons during the 1970s. In real terms, the median incomes of families headed by persons aged 25 to 64 remained virtually constant over the 1970–1983 period. The rapid growth of income of the elderly, in contrast to the relative stagnation of income growth among the younger population, has led many to assert that the income problems of the elderly have been solved.³

Income comparisons of older and younger populations, however, must take account of many factors. In 1985, the median income of younger households was \$23,618; for older households it was \$13,254. A naive comparison based on household income would suggest that younger households are far more affluent than older households. But correcting for the fact that younger households tend to be larger leads to a different conclusion. Average 1985 per capita income was \$11,304 for elderly households and \$10,975 for younger households — providing support for those who would like to see further constraints placed on public programs for the elderly. But per capita income comparisons ignore economics of scale in households, thereby overadjusting for the differences in the average size of older and younger households. Careful estimates that take account of household economies of scale indicate that the incomes of older and younger households are roughly equivalent.

Nevertheless, the economic problems of several elderly subgroups have *not* been solved. Policies designed to improve the economic status of the general older population are not the same as policies to improve the economic status of older persons in poverty. This is reflected in Table 1, which shows that although the poverty rate among the older population declined from 24.6 percent in 1970 to 12.4 percent in 1986, not all older persons share equally in this progress. For instance, Table 1 indicates that the poverty rate was 8.2 percent among white females living in families in 1986. But among black females living in families, the poverty rate was 27.8 percent; and among black females living alone it was 59.7 percent.

Why have high poverty rates been so stubborn for certain segments of the older population? This article argues that the answer lies in understanding how income sources differ for various subsets of the older population as well as how these sources are influenced by public policies. In particular, it will be demonstrated that there are systematic differences between the income sources of older persons above and below the poverty level. Because of this, public policies during the 1970s and early 1980s have tended to benefit the general older population much more than the elderly in poverty. Moreover, further reductions in poverty among the elderly are unlikely to occur as a result of national income maintenance policies targeted to the total older population.

In addition, the incidence of poverty among older persons in particular local areas will be influenced by the representation of high-risk demographic groups (i.e., demographic groups prone to low incomes) and the performance of the economy in these areas. This article examines the role of state and local policies in improving the economic status of older persons living in poverty. To illustrate the interaction of federal, state, and local policies in concrete fashion, Annual Housing Survey data for the Boston metropolitan area are used to trace changes in the economic status of older persons over the period 1974–1981. The findings are not optimistic. The data indicate that the number of state and local policy options for reducing poverty among the elderly is limited.

On the other hand, there is room for improving the effectiveness of these options. Such improvements, if pursued with sufficient vigor, could have a substantial impact on poverty rates among the older population.

Table 1

**Percentage of Elderly Below the Poverty Level,
Nationwide, by Family Status, Race, and Sex,
1970–1986**

Family Status	Black			White			Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
All family statuses							
1970	41.2	52.5	47.7	17.1	26.5	22.6	24.6
1974	25.9	40.4	34.3	9.3	15.3	12.8	14.6
1977	29.7	41.1	36.3	8.3	14.4	11.9	14.1
1981	32.2	43.5	39.0	8.5	16.2	13.1	15.3
1986	24.2	35.5	31.0	6.9	13.3	10.7	12.4
In families							
1970	36.9	37.1	36.9	13.2	12.6	12.9	14.8
1974	21.4	23.1	22.4	6.6	6.0	6.3	7.6
1977	25.4	28.6	27.1	6.0	5.8	5.9	7.8
1981	27.0	27.0	27.1	6.5	7.1	6.8	8.4
1986	19.5	27.8	22.1	4.9	8.2	5.4	7.0
Unrelated individuals							
1970	58.5	78.2	72.3	36.1	47.5	44.8	47.2
1974	38.1	68.2	58.0	23.6	28.7	27.6	30.3
1977	39.4	60.7	52.9	20.1	25.8	24.6	27.3
1981	45.1	64.3	58.8	19.7	28.2	26.5	29.8
1986	39.8	59.7	53.9	16.7	23.7	22.1	25.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population Below the Poverty Level," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

**Aggregate Trends in the Economic Status of the Older
Population**

The most comprehensive intercensal source of information on Boston’s older population is the Annual Housing Survey (AHS). The AHS has an important advantage over the Decennial Census of Population and Housing for examining recent changes in the economic status of Boston’s aged, namely the provision of income information for critical years *during* the 1970s. During the 1970s, national legislation (especially the 1972 Social Security amendments), in combination with trends in labor force participation and the expansion of private pension coverage, had important impacts on the incomes of older households. To examine how these factors influenced the economic status of alternative subgroups of the older population, it is necessary to have income data for more years than provided by the Decennial Census. For specific metropolitan areas, this criterion is fulfilled only by the AHS.⁴

The specific metropolitan areas included in each wave of the AHS are surveyed approximately every three years on a rotating basis. At the time of this study, Boston data were available for 1974, 1977, and 1981. Using the AHS, percentage changes in real mean and median income levels (in 1981 dollars) were calculated for several elderly subgroups for 1974–1981. Table 2 compares these results to the corresponding national changes in real elderly income. Trends in both mean and median incomes are shown to account for the fact that incomes among the elderly are highly skewed. That is, a relatively small group of

Table 2

**Percentage Change in Real Mean and Median
Incomes (1981 dollars) of Elderly Families in Boston
and in the United States, by Race and Sex,
1974–1981**

	All Households	Race of Family Head		Sex of Family Head	
		White	Black	Male	Female
Boston					
Mean	–9	–9	–23	–12	–1
Median	–2	–2	–18	–6	–6
United States					
Mean	13	14	1	15	1
Median	14	14	1	17	–7

Sources: Boston: Tabulation of Annual Housing Survey data. United States: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Consumer Income," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office).

Based on less than 100 cases.

the elderly with very high incomes tend to pull the mean income statistics upward, rendering the mean a biased indicator of the incomes of most older persons.⁵ Because of this, researchers generally prefer the median as a measure of central tendency when examining income distributions.

The most striking finding presented in Table 2 is the 1974–1981 decline in the real income (as measured by both the mean and median) of elderly households in Boston. Every elderly subgroup examined experienced such a decline. This pattern of declining income among Boston's elderly is in sharp contrast to the increases in real income among nearly all elderly subgroups nationwide. Of the groups studied, only the median incomes of female-headed older households experienced a decline in real income over 1974–1981.

One must be cautious in making too much of this disparity because of data reliability issues raised by fluctuations in the sample size of the AHS from year to year. The 1974 Boston AHS contained information on 2,718 elderly households. In 1977, the sample included 2,297 elderly households. But in 1981, the sample size was reduced to only 868 older households. Moreover, information was available for less than 100 older black households in each of the three years. This problem was particularly acute in 1981, when the sample included only 29 black elderly households.

Nevertheless, the sample size in each year should be sufficient to provide reliable estimates for the incomes of all Boston elderly households. Table 2 clearly shows that both mean and median real incomes of older Boston households declined over 1974–1981, in contrast to the increases in real income experienced by elderly households nationwide.

It is also important to note that real income gains among the national older population over 1974–1981 differed among elderly subgroups. Older males and whites experienced large gains in real income, but older females and blacks experienced almost no increases in real income. In fact, the real median income of households headed by older women actually declined by 7 percent.

Trends in Income Versus Trends in Poverty

Table 1 demonstrates that there is great disparity in the distribution of poverty among the older population. Regardless of family status, blacks have systematically higher poverty rates than whites, and females have systematically higher poverty rates than males. It is not surprising, therefore, that the income statistics in Table 2 reflect a pattern that is consistent with the poverty rates in Table 1.⁶

There are structural reasons for the higher incidence of poverty among certain elderly subpopulations. Males tend to live in families (i.e., with their spouses), whereas elderly women are more likely to be widowed. For most older couples, death of the spouse results in a one-third reduction in Social Security benefits and (until recently) often the cessation of private pension benefits as well.⁷ Men are also more likely than women to have continuous work histories and are therefore more apt to fulfill private pension vesting requirements. In addition, men are more likely than women to work in industries and occupations with good private pension coverage. Finally, Social Security and private pension benefits tend to be higher for men because men tend to be paid more than women for the same work.

Similar reasons explain lower incomes among the older black population. Like women, blacks tend to be paid less than white males, to have interrupted work histories, and to work in industries and occupations with poor pension coverage. The structural characteristics of the labor market faced by women and blacks in their working years eventually manifest themselves as inadequate income in retirement.

With this in mind, what was the relationship between the trends in median incomes discussed above and patterns in poverty rates among elderly subpopulations? Using the national median income statistics reported in Table 2, in conjunction with the poverty statistics in Table 1, we can examine this question for older blacks and whites over the period 1974–1981.

Table 1 indicates that poverty rates for older blacks *increased* from 34 percent in 1974 to 39 percent in 1981. This increase in poverty among older blacks reflects the failure of median elderly black incomes to keep pace with inflation from 1974 to 1981. Similarly, Table 1 indicates that the poverty rate among older whites increased from 12.8 percent in 1974 to 13.1 percent in 1981. The upward trend in poverty among older whites (and the older population in general) at first seems counterintuitive, since the median incomes of older whites increased substantially faster than inflation over 1974–1981. However, the seemingly inconsistent trends in elderly poverty and median income growth are perfectly compatible if the factors leading to income growth among the older population in general do not affect the incomes of those in poverty.

How do trends in poverty among Boston's older population compare with those of the national elderly population? A partial answer is provided by Table 3, which reports trends in poverty among the elderly in Boston and the United States, differentiated by family status. It is apparent that over the period 1969–1979 poverty among older individuals and families declined substantially in Boston and in the country as a whole. Most of this decline resulted from the 1972 Social Security amendments, which significantly increased benefit levels.⁸ The same phenomenon is illustrated more clearly in Table 1 by the sharp drop in poverty rates for all elderly subpopulations between 1970 and 1974.

The 1972 Social Security amendments also legislated automatic cost of living adjustments (COLAs) so that benefits would keep pace with inflation. The COLAs were responsible for the relative stability of poverty rates between 1974 and 1981 (since poverty

Table 3

Percentage of Elderly Persons Below the Poverty Level in Boston and in the United States, by Family Type, 1969 and 1979

Family Status	1969		1979	
	Boston	United States	Boston	United States
In families	8.9	17.6	7.4	8.4
Unrelated individuals	40.2	47.3	20.1	29.4
All family statuses	*	25.1	12.9	14.7

*Data not available.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Massachusetts," *1970 Census of Population*, vol.1, part 23 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973). U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Detailed Population Characteristics: Massachusetts," *1980 Census of Population and Housing*, vol.1 part 23 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983). U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population Below the Poverty Level: 1984," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, no. 152 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985).

levels are also adjusted to reflect price increases).⁹ Gains in real income among the general older population were spurred by the expansion of private pension receipt during the 1970s.

The similarity of *trends* in poverty among the older population in Boston and in the nation is instructive in understanding the underlying factors that influence these trends. Income levels and poverty rates in any locality will differ from corresponding national statistics because of differences in the performance of the local economy and demographic composition. Nevertheless, it seems clear that trends in the economic status of most older persons during the 1970s were strongly influenced by Social Security and private pension policies.

The effect of these policies on the elderly poor, however, has been much smaller. It is true that the 1972 Social Security amendments substantially reduced poverty rates among the elderly in the early 1970s. And since 1975, automatic COLAs have enabled the incomes of poor older persons to largely keep pace with inflation. But poor older persons have not experienced significant real income gains from Social Security since the 1972 amendments, and they have been almost completely bypassed by the expansion of the private pension system.

The preceding discussion raises an important point: policies designed to improve the mean or median income level of the entire older population are not the same as policies designed to reduce poverty among the elderly. As discussed in the next section, most national income maintenance policies for the aged have concentrated on improving income adequacy for the older population as a whole; reductions in poverty among the elderly have occurred mainly as a by-product of this more general policy. Consequently, further reductions in elderly poverty rates are not likely to be achieved through income maintenance policies targeted to the general older population.

The remainder of the article examines trends in income sources among different segments of the older population during the 1970s and early 1980s. Data for Boston and Massachusetts are used in combination with national statistics to identify policy alterna-

tives at each level of government that could be used to reduce poverty rates among the elderly. Although the demographic and economic characteristics of Massachusetts and Boston differ from those of other states and localities, the effect of these differences on policy is a matter of degree rather than kind. Thus, our conclusions should be relevant for policymakers seeking to reduce poverty among the elderly in other states and local areas as well.

Trends in Income Sources

In the previous section, it was shown that recent trends in income growth and poverty rates have differed widely among subgroups of the older population. Why is this the case? One approach to answering this question is to disaggregate the incomes of these different subgroups by source. If the income mix of these subgroups differs systematically, then the groups may have been differentially affected by economic conditions and public policies. Understanding the nature of income differences among elderly subgroups may therefore help to illuminate policy options to improve the economic status of those in need.

Tables 4 and 5 report trends in the income composition of elderly families during the 1970s. Collectively, these tables provide a picture of how the income composition of older families differs by poverty status, race, and sex, as well as how this income composition has shifted over time. Table 4 illustrates trends in the composition of total household income of aged families (with the head of the household aged 65 or older) above and below the poverty level for the United States, Massachusetts, and Boston. In families above poverty, two trends are evident over 1970–1980: (1) the decline in the relative importance of earnings and (2) the increase in the importance of Social Security as an income source. Even more striking is the importance of Social Security as a source of income for families in poverty. As would be expected, the income composition of older families in Boston are more similar to those in Massachusetts than to the national population, regardless of poverty status.

Table 5 focuses on trends in the income composition of elderly Boston families over 1974–1981, disaggregated by sex and race of the head of household. The table provides slightly more detail than Table 4 on asset and pension income as well as shifts in income composition *within* the period 1974–1981. The factors underlying the shifts in the income composition of older households reflected in Tables 4 and 5 are discussed below.

Decline in the Importance of Earnings

One of the most significant trends in Tables 4 and 5 for income maintenance policy is the decline of earnings in the income composition of older families. The reason for the decline in earnings is, of course, the declining labor force participation of older persons.

Table 6 reports trends in labor force participation by age, sex, and race for Massachusetts and the United States. In virtually every age, sex, and race category, labor force participation rates among the older population declined over 1970–1980. The one exception was among older women aged 55 to 59; their labor force participation rates actually increased marginally. There was little difference in the generally downward trends in labor force participation rates between older persons in Massachusetts and in the United States. However, it is interesting to note that the *level* of labor force participation rates of older persons in Massachusetts appears to be significantly higher than in the national older population. This suggests a potential role for increased emphasis on employment

Table 4

Percentage of Elderly Income Derived from Various Sources, in the United States, in Massachusetts, and in Boston, 1969 and 1979

	Wages	Social Security	Dividends, Interest, Rent	Self-Employment	Public Assistance	Other
United States						
Above poverty						
1969*	43.3	20.5	†	8.9	1.2	26.0‡
1979	31.8	26.8	20.2	6.3	1.4	13.4
Below poverty						
1969	13.4	66.4	†	0.9	10.6	8.7
1979	11.1	69.4	1.8	-1.3	14.3	4.8
Massachusetts						
Above poverty						
1969*	51.6	16.2	†	7.2	0.9	24.1‡
1979	38.7	25.7	16.4	4.6	1.4	13.2
Below poverty						
1969	10.3	74.0	†	-0.1	5.5	10.3
1979	10.3	71.1	4.6	-0.1	9.2	5.0
Boston						
Above poverty						
1969*	53.0	14.2	†	7.5	0.8	24.6‡
1979	41.3	22.5	17.1	5.3	1.2	12.6
Below poverty						
1969	10.5	73.1	†	0.1	6.2	10.1
1979	10.0	68.9	3.8	0.6	11.3	5.4

*Includes all income levels.

†Data not separately available.

‡Includes income from pensions other than Social Security and income from dividends, interest, and rent.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Massachusetts," Table 212, *1970 Census of Population*, vol. 1, part 23 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973). U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Detailed Population Characteristics: Massachusetts," Table 248, *1980 Census of Population and Housing*, vol. 1, part 23 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983). U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: United States Summary," Table 264, *1970 Census of Population*, vol. 1, part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973). U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Detailed Population Characteristics: United States Summary," Table 307, *1980 Census of Population and Housing*, vol. 1, part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

policies as a mechanism for improving the economic status of older persons, especially in Massachusetts where there seems to be a greater inclination on the part of older persons to participate in the labor force.

Social Security

The disincentive effects of Social Security on labor force participation stem from two aspects of eligibility criteria for Social Security. Perhaps the most important of these is the availability of full benefits at age 65 and of less than actuarially reduced benefits begin-

Table 5

Percentage of Elderly Income Derived from Various Sources, in Boston, 1974–1981

	Wages	Social Security	Dividends, Interest, Rent	Self- Employment	Public Assistance	Pension	Other
All Households							
1974	34.1	29.2	13.5	8.3	7.4	*	7.5†
1977	26.4	34.9	16.8	5.3	1.3	14.6	0.8
1981	24.8	41.0	15.2	5.0	0.9	13.0	0.2
Individuals							
Male							
1974	36.5	26.7	11.7	10.5	6.9	*	7.7†
1977	27.6	32.7	15.2	7.1	1.0	16.0	0.5
1981	26.7	38.1	13.0	6.7	0.5	14.9	0.2
Female							
1974	29.3	34.2	16.9	4.0	8.5	*	7.1†
1978	24.4	38.5	19.5	2.3	1.9	12.3	1.2
1981	21.7	45.7	18.8	2.1	1.6	9.9	0.2
White							
1974	33.9	29.1	13.6	8.5	7.4	*	7.5†
1977	26.4	34.8	16.9	5.3	1.3	14.6	0.7
1981	24.7	41.0	15.4	4.9	0.9	12.9	0.2
Black							
1974‡	44.7	37.1	6.0	—	6.6	*	5.6†
1978‡,§	29.6	52.0	6.3	0.5	4.4	7.0	0.2
1981‡,§	32.9	41.6	2.8	—	5.4	17.3	—

*Data not separately available.

†Includes pension income.

‡Based on less than 100 cases.

§Based on unweighted data.

Sources: Tabulations of AHS data. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: United States Summary," Table 216, *1970 Census of Population*, vol. 1, part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973). U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Detailed Population Characteristics: United States Summary," Table 272, *1980 Census of Population and Housing*, vol. 1, part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983).

ning at age 62. Of course, it is not only the availability of benefits but the perceived adequacy of these benefits that affects the retirement decision. As discussed in the previous section, the adequacy of Social Security benefits was substantially increased by the 1972 Social Security amendments, which legislated significant benefit liberalizations as well as automatic cost of living adjustments (COLAs) tied to the consumer price index.

In addition to eligibility criteria and adequacy of benefits, retirement decisions may be influenced by the Social Security earnings test. Under the earnings test, benefits are reduced by fifty cents for each dollar of earnings above an exempt level (which changes periodically). Several studies have found that the earnings test is a deterrent to labor force participation.¹⁰

The poor macroeconomic conditions of the late 1970s and early 1980s accentuated the decline in the importance of earnings and the rise in the importance of Social Security in

Table 6

**Labor Force Participation Rates in Massachusetts
and in the United States, by Age, Race, and Sex,
1970 and 1980**

Age	Male			Female		
	Total	White	Black	Total	White	Black
Massachusetts						
1970						
55-59	90.0	90.1	80.5	57.2	57.2	55.7
60-64	79.7	79.9	70.7	46.8	46.8	44.4
65-69	46.7	46.9	37.3	22.7	22.6	26.2
70-74	26.0	26.0	24.8	10.7	10.6	15.9
75+	13.6	13.7	13.8	5.0	4.9	9.5
1980						
55-59	85.5	85.9	74.0	57.6	57.7	57.0
60-64	67.7	67.9	59.6	42.0	42.0	44.6
65-69	31.9	32.1	25.0	17.2	17.1	19.8
70-74	19.2	19.3	17.7	8.1	8.1	9.8
75+	8.6	8.6	8.7	3.0	3.0	6.3
United States						
1970						
55-59	86.8	87.6	77.9	47.4	47.1	50.2
60-64	73.0	73.7	65.9	36.1	35.9	38.8
65-69	39.0	39.3	35.4	17.2	17.0	19.4
70-74	22.4	22.7	19.6	9.1	8.9	11.6
75+	12.0	12.0	12.0	4.7	4.5	7.1
1980						
55-59	80.6	81.8	69.4	48.4	48.2	50.2
60-64	60.4	61.0	53.7	34.0	33.8	36.9
65-69	29.2	29.5	26.1	15.0	14.8	16.9
70-74	18.3	18.5	16.3	7.8	7.7	9.3
75+	9.1	9.1	8.9	3.2	3.0	4.9

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Massachusetts," Table 165, *1970 Census of Population*, vol. 1, part 23 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973). U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Detailed Population Characteristics: Massachusetts," Table 213, *1980 Census of Population and Housing*, vol. 1, part 23 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983).

the income mix of elderly households. It did so by presenting older workers with poor labor market conditions, stimulating firms to offer early retirement programs to trim their labor forces and increasing the size of Social Security benefits through substantial inflation adjustments. These factors are reflected in Tables 4 and 5 through both the declining importance of earnings and the increasing importance of Social Security in the composition of elderly household incomes over 1974-1981.

As indicated in Table 1 by the reduction in poverty accompanying the 1972 amendments, Social Security is a potentially powerful mechanism for reducing poverty among the aged. But, as will be discussed in the following section, there are many political issues surrounding increased targeting of Social Security benefits to the poor.

Dividends, Interest, and Rent

One of the most misleading facets of Tables 4 and 5 is the importance of dividends, inter-

est, and rent in the income composition of the elderly. Although asset income makes a significant contribution to the income of the elderly in aggregate, the distribution of this income among the older population is highly skewed. For example, in 1981, mean asset income for all elderly households in Boston was \$1,867, but the median value was only \$200. Moreover, 40 percent of elderly households had no asset income at all. This is reflected in Table 4 by the differential between the importance of asset income in the income composition of older families above and below poverty. As would be expected, the distribution of asset income was less skewed among older males, elderly couples, and whites than it was among older females, elderly individuals, and blacks. These findings are similar to those of other studies. For example, using a nationally representative sample, a recent study¹¹ found that in 1982, 32 percent of all elderly households had no asset income, and another 31 percent reported asset incomes of under \$500 per year.

Public Assistance

Table 5 indicates that the importance of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other public assistance¹² in the income composition of older Boston households has diminished over time.¹³ In 1974, income from SSI and other public assistance constituted more than 7 percent of aggregate household income for Boston's older population; by 1981, this had declined to less than 1 percent. Of course, income from these sources is concentrated among the poorest segments of the older population. In 1974, about 26 percent of the older population received some sort of public assistance (including SSI); by 1981, this had declined to 9.6 percent and was concentrated among older women and blacks. Although less than 7 percent of households headed by an older male received SSI and/or other public assistance income in 1981, over 12 percent of households headed by older women and 24 percent of older black households received some form of public assistance income. In light of the persistence of poverty among older women and minorities, this suggests that increased cash transfers to the aged poor (e.g., through SSI) might be an effective policy mechanism for lowering poverty rates among the elderly.

Pensions and Miscellaneous

Finally, Table 5 suggests that the importance of pensions (and other income) in the overall income composition of Boston's aged households increased markedly between 1974 and 1977.¹⁴ Unfortunately, it is not possible to directly measure growth in the importance of pension income over 1974–1977 because in 1974 the AHS did not separately identify pension income, including it merely in “other” income. Nevertheless, even if all of 1974 “other income” was pension income, the data indicate tremendous growth in the importance of pensions between 1974 and 1977. Between 1977 and 1981 the relative importance of pensions declined somewhat due to the substantial growth in the importance of Social Security benefits and moderate declines in pension coverage.

As one would expect, pensions are a more important income source for older couples, males, and whites than for elderly individuals, women, and blacks. For example, in 1981 over 43 percent of older couples and 42 percent of households headed by older men received income from pensions other than Social Security. However, the same was true of only 17 percent of older black households and 10 percent of households headed by older women. These results are similar to national statistics.¹⁵

Finally, it should be noted that the growth in the importance of pension incomes throughout the 1970s was, like the importance of Social Security, a major factor behind early retirement trends. For example, federal employees with thirty years of service can

retire with full benefits at age 55, and most state and local plans provide similarly liberal early retirement benefits. Even more significant are the early retirement incentives built into private pension plans. A study of these plans by the Bureau of Labor Statistics¹⁶ found that over half of all workers in a pension plan were eligible for full retirement benefits before age 65. About the same percentage could receive reduced benefits beginning at age 55.

Implications for Income Maintenance Policy

The preceding discussion suggests that the economic status of the elderly is closely related to the composition of household income. Although absolute levels of income and poverty between Boston's older population and the corresponding national population differ, trends in income and poverty are similar. This is also true of trends in income composition. Whether one looks at data for Boston, the state of Massachusetts, or the entire country, the same trends stand out: the declining importance of earnings and the rising importance of Social Security in the income composition of older households. We saw in the preceding section that it is no accident that the importance of earnings has been declining at the same time as the importance of Social Security has been increasing. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that Social Security and, to a lesser extent, private pension programs were the driving force behind trends in the economic status of the older population during the 1970s and early 1980s.

But there are some wrinkles. In particular, the income composition of the elderly in poverty is systematically different from that of the elderly with incomes above the poverty line. Although Social Security is the primary source of income for most older persons, it is especially important for older women and minorities. Paradoxically, however, Social Security benefit levels are the *least* adequate for older women and minorities because of the characteristics of their work histories. And, of course, when the effects of race and sex are combined, the detrimental impacts on retirement income are magnified. Thus, it is not surprising that Table 1 indicates such a high incidence of poverty among older black women.

It has been amply demonstrated in the literature¹⁷ that a critical factor in the adequacy of retirement benefits is the receipt of income from more than one source. Because over 90 percent of the elderly (aged 65 and older) receive Social Security benefits, this implies that income from earnings, assets, or a pension in addition to Social Security is crucial in determining the adequacy of the average older person's retirement income.

Until recently, the vesting requirements of most private pension plans required ten years of continuous service. As a result, the work histories of women were likely to result in either low pension benefits or no benefits at all. The 1986 Tax Reform Act required full vesting in single-employer plans after five years of service.¹⁸ This legislation has been projected to increase the pension receipt of older women by 23 percent by the year 2015.¹⁹ These projections, however, do not take account of several provisions in the 1986 act that may result in plan reductions and terminations.²⁰ Consequently, projections of future growth in pension receipt may be overstated.

It is clear that poverty in old age doesn't just happen. It is the result of the characteristics of Social Security and pension plan provisions, the societal roles of women, racial discrimination, and the lack of access of minorities to better educational and job opportunities. All these factors imply that the elimination of poverty among the aged will not be achieved overnight. Although a great deal of progress was made during the past decade

(mainly as a result of the 1972 Social Security amendments), the remaining “pockets of poverty” will probably prove much more difficult to eliminate.

A variety of policy options can be identified to improve the economic status of the elderly poor. Some of these options are national in scope, such as Social Security and private pension reforms. However, where national policies fall short there is a need for state and local policies to fill the gap. In the following sections, some reforms to private pensions and Social Security are considered that are of current policy interest along with the likely impacts of these reforms on the incomes of the elderly in poverty. Finally, programs to encourage the employment of older workers and issues influencing the effectiveness of SSI within the context of reducing poverty among the elderly in Massachusetts and Boston are examined.

Pension Reform

Many options exist for improving the adequacy of pension incomes in retirement. Two of the most frequently discussed options are increasing pension portability and extending pension plan coverage. A variety of specific proposals have been offered with respect to each option.

Improving the portability of pension plans would enable persons who have interrupted work histories or who change jobs to continue earning credits toward vesting requirements. There are several current examples of limited pension portability, including pension plans in large national companies that provide pension coverage to their employees regardless of their geographical location; multiemployer plans that offer interfirm portability to employees within an industry (e.g., the automotive and steel industries); and government pension plans covering more than one agency. However, such portability is the exception rather than the rule.

Several approaches to improving pension portability have been suggested. One approach is legislation to encourage the development of defined contribution plans, which do not determine benefits as a function of preretirement earnings (in contrast to defined benefit plans, which do). It is not clear, however, that such legislation would ultimately increase pension benefits even if it did succeed in increasing pension portability. Another mechanism for increasing pension portability is tax legislation to discourage spending of preretirement lump sum distributions. Tax legislation has the merit of increasing effective pension portability without requiring changes to the complex pension system itself. The 1986 Tax Reform Act imposes tax penalties on several categories of “cashed out” retirement benefits, but the ultimate effects of this legislation are unclear at this time.

A second approach to increasing the adequacy of retirement incomes provided by pensions is to expand pension coverage. The extent of pension coverage differs by industry, degree of unionization, and size of firm. The most ambitious proposal to increase the extent of pension coverage is to establish a minimum universal pension system.²¹ However, while such a mandatory system would increase coverage, it might also create unemployment by raising costs for small employers. In addition, gains in pension income resulting from pension coverage might be offset by declines in other components of compensation (e.g., wages). More moderate methods for encouraging the expansion of pension coverage include changes in ERISA requirements and legislation providing additional tax advantages for small businesses.

Despite the potential benefits from pension reform, it should be noted that major problems with pension income would remain. Notably, most private pension plans fail to sys-

tematically adjust benefits for decreases in purchasing power brought about by inflation over time. This is true even for fully vested workers who change jobs prior to their pension eligibility age, because pension benefits are typically "frozen" when vested workers change employers. The value of private pension benefits continues to be eroded by inflation after pension receipt. This has prompted some to suggest that efforts to improve the adequacy of retirement incomes should be focused on Social Security rather than on public and private pensions. After all, coverage under Social Security is nearly universal, benefits are portable, and benefits are adjusted for inflation.

Social Security Reform

Social Security provisions have been the focus of considerable debate. Two major areas of this debate are (1) the adequacy and equity of the benefits provided to different subgroups of the older population and (2) the effects of Social Security on labor force participation. As discussed below, the debate continues with respect to alternative reforms to improve the adequacy and equity of the Social Security benefit structure. But the 1983 Social Security amendments contained several provisions that may influence the effects of Social Security on the labor force participation of older persons.

Adequacy and Equity of Benefits

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been given to the adequacy and equity of Social Security benefits for older women and low-income workers.²² Problems with respect to the treatment of women under current Social Security provisions arise because the program was designed with two major family types and patterns of labor force participation in mind: single workers and married couples.²³ Married men were assumed to be lifelong paid workers; married women were assumed to be unpaid homemakers. A number of social trends over the past several decades have rendered these assumptions increasingly unrealistic. For instance, over half of all women were in the labor force in 1984. In addition, the number of women who are divorced, separated, or widowed is rising rapidly.

Several options for improving women's benefits under Social Security have been considered. These options have attempted to address three broad issues:²⁴ equity and adequacy of spouse and survivors' benefits; fairness in treating one-earner versus two-earner families; and coverage of homemakers and divorced persons. Specific approaches that have been suggested for dealing with these issues include eliminating the spouse benefit and splitting the earnings of husband and wife in calculating benefits; increasing the worker's benefit rate and correspondingly reducing the spouse rate; and extending coverage and benefits to nonsalaried workers. However, while there is widespread consensus that reforms are needed, there is no agreement yet on what the nature of these reforms should be.

Issues of adequacy and equity also arise with respect to how Social Security treats low-income workers. For example, it is frequently argued that Social Security payroll taxes are regressive and therefore represent a greater burden on lower-income than on higher-income workers. The counter to this argument is that Social Security benefit formulas are designed to provide relatively more generous benefits to low-income workers than to high-income workers (as measured by the percentage of preretirement income "replaced" by Social Security). This type of inherent conflict in how Social Security treats low-income workers has led to many proposals to separate the welfare and pension aspects of the program. However, others point out that when explicit distinctions in the

treatment of lower-income and higher-income workers are made, it becomes much more difficult to get political support for improving the situation of the poor.

If specific options could be identified to unambiguously improve Social Security's treatment of women and low-income workers and at the same time to be cost-effective, to not entail the reduction of benefits for other groups, and to not weaken the welfare aspects of the program through the erosion of general political support, these options would be legislated tomorrow. But each of the policy options discussed above has at least one of these drawbacks. Consequently, substantial improvements in the income adequacy of the elderly poor as a result of Social Security reform are not likely in the near term.

Impacts on Labor Force Participation

In addition to issues of adequacy and equity, there has been considerable interest in how Social Security influences the retirement decision. As discussed earlier, Social Security through its eligibility criteria and its earnings test appears to have been a major source of encouragement for the early retirement trend. However, several provisions of the 1983 Social Security amendments were designed to encourage workers to remain in the labor force. These provisions include the following:

1. Increasing the delayed retirement credit, beginning in 1990
2. Liberalizing the earnings test, beginning in 1990
3. Incrementally increasing the "normal retirement age" from 65 to 67 beginning in 2000

The delayed retirement credit is currently 3 percent for each year that a worker does not receive benefits between age 65 and 70. The 1983 amendments gradually raise this credit to 8 percent per year between 1990 and 2008. Will increasing the delayed retirement credit be successful in encouraging older workers to remain in the labor force? Probably not. Despite the collective importance of other factors in explaining the retirement decisions of older workers, the literature indicates that two factors dominate: (1) poor health status and (2) sufficient income to retire. An extensive literature has documented the importance of poor health as a predictor of early retirement.²⁵ While health problems are undeniably a major factor in retirement decisions, however, declining labor force participation rates cannot be explained by deteriorating health among the older population.²⁶ Rather, the primary impetus for early retirement trends has been the increase in retirement income brought about by Social Security benefit increases and expanded pension coverage.²⁷ As long as retirement incomes remain high enough, the retirement decisions of older workers will probably not be influenced strongly by increasing the delayed retirement credit.

Similarly, the liberalization of the earnings test is designed to abate the tide of early retirements. Under current law, one dollar in benefits is withheld for each two dollars of earnings above an exempt amount that changes each year. Beginning in 1990, one dollar in benefits will be withheld for each three dollars in earnings above the exempt amount. Thus the "tax" on nonexempt earnings will decline from 50 percent to 33 percent. However, as with the delayed retirement credit, this policy is unlikely to influence the retirement decision of most older workers.

Finally, as a result of the 1983 Social Security amendments, the normal retirement age is scheduled to gradually increase to 67 beginning in the year 2000. At that time a retiree will still be able to receive reduced benefits at age 62, as is current practice. But the actu-

arial reduction for electing to take early retirement benefits will be higher than at present (70 percent of the age 67 benefit versus 80 percent of the age 65 benefit under current law). If the future benefit reductions impair the ability of older persons to afford retirement, it is possible that increasing the normal retirement age may encourage many older persons to remain in the labor force (especially workers with poor retirement incomes).

It is interesting to note that the Social Security Administration actuaries assumed that raising the normal retirement age would result in a large labor force participation response on the part of older workers. However, studies that have simulated the effects of the 1983 amendments on the labor force participation of older persons indicate that these effects are likely to be small — only about one-tenth of the magnitude assumed by the actuaries.²⁸

Of course, the 1983 Social Security amendments that are designed to encourage the *continued* labor force participation of older workers have no effect on older persons outside the labor force. Despite the fact that most older persons retire because they are financially able to do so, it is clear that a substantial segment of the older work force retires because of deteriorating health. Many of these older workers, however, might gladly accept part-time employment if it were available. In addition, a comparatively small but significant number of older workers are forced to retire because of age discrimination. Moreover, some people retire of their own accord only to find that retirement is not what they expected. Thus, there appears to be a role for programs that facilitate the employment of older persons.

Employment Policies and the Older Worker

In addition to influencing retirement decisions of older workers at the national level through reforms to Social Security and private pension provisions, it is possible to encourage the labor force participation of older persons more directly through employment programs.

There are currently two major public employment programs for older workers: the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Both are federal programs that are implemented at the local level.

The JTPA was designed to establish a nationwide network of job training programs, some of which are targeted specifically to older workers. The JTPA legislation established two principal training programs. The first of these, Title II, is targeted toward disadvantaged youths and adults (it has no upper age limit). The second, Title III, is targeted toward dislocated workers, including long-term unemployed older workers. In addition, under Section 124(a-d) of JTPA, states are required to set aside 3 percent of their Title III allocation for the training of economically disadvantaged workers aged 55 and older. JTPA programs are meant to be jointly administered by local governments and private agencies. Thus, JTPA programs provide an appropriate focal point for Massachusetts state policy in developing employment programs for older workers within Boston and other communities.

An excellent example of the potential effectiveness of JTPA programs is provided by Operation Able in the greater Boston area. Operation Able is a private, nonprofit organization seeking to match potential employers with older persons (aged 55 and older) who want to work. The Operation Able network consists of twenty-eight agencies in and around Boston that offer services in career counseling, placement, skills training, and support groups. In 1986, more than 4,000 older persons were assisted by Operation Able

in seeking employment. Funding under the JTPA has been used to finance a special program called ABLE LEAD (Local Education Advocacy and Development) to provide job search support to economically disadvantaged older workers in Boston. The LEAD project assisted 242 people in 1986, achieving a 75 percent placement rate for persons enrolled in the program.

Despite its success in Boston, the emphasis of the JTPA on training has been criticized as being less effective than direct job placement. The Senior Community Service Employment Program is designed to provide part-time jobs in community service agencies for low-income persons aged 55 and older. In Massachusetts, this program provides funding for more than 300 jobs through the aging network and an additional 1,200 jobs through national contractors such as the American Association of Retired Persons, Green Thumb, the National Council of Senior Citizens, and the Urban League. However, while these numbers are impressive, they represent only a small fraction of the aged poor population. In Boston alone, there were more than 16,000 persons aged 65 and older in poverty in 1985.²⁹ Nationwide, of the more than 11 million persons estimated to be eligible for the SCSEP program in 1980, less than one percent participated.³⁰

What does the future hold for the employment of older persons in Boston? The answer depends on both the willingness of older persons to work and the level of demand for their services. Two factors appear to be particularly important in increasing labor supply on the part of older persons: the industry/occupation of employment opportunities and the availability of part-time work. Over half of workers aged 65 and older are employed in either managerial and professional jobs or support positions for technical, sales, or administrative occupations. Both types of jobs are concentrated in the wholesale and retail trade and the service industries. Recent labor force projections by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO)³¹ indicate that these industries will grow faster than any others in the coming years. Moreover, the projections forecast that more than 70 percent of overall employment growth will occur in the three occupational groups that are the biggest employers of the elderly — services, professional/technical, and clerical.

Table 7 reports recent projections of employment growth in Boston through 1995. It is clear that the service sector is, by far, the largest employer in Boston. Moreover, services are projected to have the fastest growth of any sector in Boston through 1995. Since the service sector is a major employer of older persons, there may be a growing demand for older workers in Boston if the projections of service growth are realized. Through skills training to improve the employability of older persons, job brokerage services, and educational efforts to reduce employer stereotypes about older workers, programs such as Operation Able can help many older persons to find employment who would otherwise not be able to do so. Local agencies can facilitate the employment of older workers through programs such as SCSEP as well as by providing funding and participating in the employment networks of agencies such as Operation Able. An example of the latter role for local agencies is provided by the ABLE LEAD project, which in 1986 was extended into Boston under a grant from the mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services. Through the collaborative efforts of the mayor's Commission on the Affairs of the Elderly, the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, and the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, the ABLE LEAD project is targeting employment services to older displaced homemakers, minorities, and public housing residents.

Although the increased demands for older workers implied by the CBO and Boston Redevelopment Authority projections should increase the earnings potential of many older persons, they probably will not result in major reductions in poverty among the

Table 7

**Projections of Employment Growth in Boston,
1985–1995**

Industry	1985 Employment (thousands)	Projected 1995 Employment (thousands)	Percentage Change 1985–1995
Agriculture and mining	1.3	1.3	—
Construction	13.7	15.1	10.2
Manufacturing	42.5	41.0	–3.5
Transportation and public utilities	36.6	39.0	6.5
Wholesale trade	25.8	26.1	1.2
Retail trade	63.7	70.4	10.5
Finance, insurance, and real estate	85.1	102.0	19.9
Services	225.9	301.8	33.6
Government	99.2	104.2	5.0
Total	593.8	700.9	18.0

Source: Jeffrey P. Brown, *Boston Employment Trends and Projections by Industry*, Report No. 247, Boston Redevelopment Authority, December 1986.

aged. Even with special training, many of those who are poor in old age lack the job skills necessary for consistent employment. Others are in poor health (and thus are unable to work) or are unable to work for a variety of other reasons. Employment programs will not be effective in reducing poverty among these persons.

Moreover, employer stereotypes about the lower productivity of older workers are hard to dispel. Employers may also resist hiring older workers because they fear that older workers will qualify for pension benefits. This may be an even greater problem than in the past because of the five-year vesting required by the 1986 Tax Reform Act. In short, the demand for older workers may not be as great as employment projections suggest.

Supplemental Security Income

SSI is the most obvious program for improving the economic status of older persons in poverty.³² It is the primary income program specifically designed to increase the money incomes of the elderly poor.³³ There are, however, several major unresolved policy issues concerning SSI. These include the adequacy of benefits, low participation of income-eligible persons, and the stringent nature of the program's eligibility tests. Some of these issues can be addressed at the state and local levels. Others must be dealt with through national legislation.

Adequacy of Benefits

One way to measure the adequacy of SSI benefits is to compare payment levels with the official poverty line. In 1984, federal SSI benefits for elderly couples were about 90 percent of the official poverty line, but these benefits were only about 76 percent of the poverty line for elderly individuals. Therefore, federal SSI benefits appear to discriminate in favor of elderly couples. Although the adequacy of SSI benefits for both elderly individuals and elderly couples has increased since SSI was instituted in 1974, it is nevertheless clear that the federal SSI benefits are not sufficient, in and of themselves, to lift older persons out of poverty.

The adequacy of SSI benefits is significantly improved by state supplementation. In 1984, Massachusetts was more generous than all but three other states (Alaska, California, and Connecticut) in supplementing SSI payments. Counting supplementation, the level of SSI benefits in Massachusetts was 7 percent above the poverty line for individuals and 29 percent above the poverty line for couples. Given that poverty rates are much higher among elderly individuals than among couples, increasing the state supplementation of SSI benefits to single, poor older persons should be an effective mechanism for reducing poverty among the elderly in Boston and Massachusetts in general. In addition, such an approach would help to reduce the inequities in how the SSI program treats elderly individuals and couples. However, low participation rates of the income-eligible population hamper the effectiveness of SSI in reducing poverty among the elderly poor.

Participation Rates

Increasing the state supplementation of SSI benefits will do little to help those who are eligible for the program but for some reason do not participate. It has been estimated in several national studies that 30 to 50 percent of the elderly eligible for SSI benefits do not participate in the program.³⁴ A number of reasons for the low participation rates have been cited in the literature, but two appear to be particularly important: (1) lack of information about the program and (2) the welfare stigma attached to SSI benefits.³⁵

Despite major efforts by the Social Security Administration to disseminate information about SSI,³⁶ almost half of eligible nonparticipants have never heard of the program.³⁷ To improve public knowledge about SSI, the Social Security Administration is currently in the midst of a major outreach program mandated by the 1983 Social Security amendments.

One of the motivations for the 1974 SSI legislation was to reduce the stigma attached to Old Age Assistance, the former name of the program. It was hoped that renaming it Supplemental Security Income and establishing administrative authority for SSI with the Social Security Administration would be helpful in this regard. While James Schulz³⁸ notes that some progress has been made in reducing the welfare stigma attached to SSI, Linda Drazga and co-workers³⁹ found that welfare stigma represented a participation barrier for about one-third of the eligible nonparticipants surveyed. State and local agencies could aid the Social Security Administration in its outreach efforts (perhaps through a vigorous media campaign) and help to reduce the problem of SSI welfare stigma by working with the aging network to disseminate information about the program. SSI also contains a series of stringent asset tests that limit participation. Although allowable asset amounts were liberalized by the Deficit Reduction Act of 1984, these tests still screen a substantial segment of the income-eligible older population from participation in the program.⁴⁰

Conclusions

Nationwide, the real incomes of older persons rose dramatically during the 1970s. However, these improvements have been accompanied by shifts in public perceptions regarding the income needs of older persons. The aged are increasingly perceived as a relatively affluent and politically powerful group that is imposing unsustainable demands on the working population. Growing federal budget deficits have dramatized the economic gains of older persons and intensified concerns about the ability of the economy to support an aging population. Efforts to control federal deficits have resulted in cutbacks in social programs for the elderly and nonelderly alike. As a consequence, states and localities

such as Massachusetts and Boston are finding that they must assume increased responsibility for needy persons such as the elderly living in poverty.

This article examined the changing economic status of the older population in Boston, in Massachusetts, and in the United States during the 1970s and early 1980s. Using a combination of data sources — most notably Boston microdata files from the Annual Housing Survey for 1974, 1977, and 1981 — it was shown that despite general improvements in the income levels of older persons, large segments of the elderly population remain in poverty.

To better understand why the incomes of many elderly have failed to rise above the poverty level, trends in the total incomes of aged households were examined, disaggregated by source. This revealed that the income sources of more affluent groups of older persons (especially whites and male-headed households) are systematically different than those of poorer elderly persons (especially blacks and female-headed households). In particular, poor older persons tend to be much more dependent on income from Social Security and public assistance than other elderly. Nevertheless, except for the very affluent, Social Security was the major source of income for the majority of older persons. This suggests that federal policymakers should be careful in enacting legislation that would adversely affect the adequacy of Social Security benefits — particularly when one considers that large numbers of older persons have income levels just above the official poverty line.

The shifting policy context created by the enormous federal deficits and changing public perceptions regarding the economic status of the elderly has created an environment that fosters increased criticism of Social Security. Many would rather see the retirement income needs of older persons met through private savings and/or private pension benefits. But the distribution of private pension benefits and asset income among the elderly in Boston is highly skewed and concentrated among relatively affluent segments of the older population.

A variety of proposals and legislative changes to Social Security and pension plan regulations have been proposed to improve the distribution of income from these sources. However, because the economic ramifications of major reforms are unknown, the likelihood of their implementation is low. Consequently, it seems clear that substantial pockets of poverty will remain among the elderly for the foreseeable future. It is these remaining pockets of poverty that provide the most fertile ground for state and local government policies. This article focused on two broad areas of income maintenance policy for poor older persons — employment programs and SSI.

Employment programs for older workers are currently of considerable interest to policymakers. The aging population has many policymakers worried about the “burden” of retirees on income maintenance programs. To the extent that older persons can be encouraged to work, they help to support income maintenance programs for others and reduce pension system demands. Perhaps more important, there is evidence that labor force participation leads to improved economic status.

However, while employment programs may be useful for older persons who are willing and able to work, they are probably not the answer for many elderly in poverty who lack necessary job skills or whose health prevents them from working. For these individuals, direct income transfers through SSI represent a more effective mechanism for reducing poverty. Unfortunately, the SSI program is not without problems of its own. Benefits are low, especially for older individuals. Asset and income eligibility tests are extremely stringent, hampering the effectiveness of SSI in reducing the debilitating effects of pov-

erty on those who are functionally destitute. Finally, participation rates in SSI, even among the eligible population, are very low.

The commonwealth of Massachusetts (and other states) can improve the adequacy of SSI by increasing the state supplementation of benefits, especially for poor individuals. This should be coupled with outreach efforts designed to reduce the welfare stigma associated with the receipt of SSI benefits and to educate the public about the availability of benefits.

Of course, employment programs and SSI are not the only mechanisms for improving the effective economic status of poor older persons in Boston. Others include food stamps, energy subsidies, medical programs, and housing subsidies/public housing. Most of these programs can also be influenced by state and local policies.

Of course, whether the program is SSI or Medicaid, current policies to address poverty among the elderly treat its symptoms and not its underlying causes. In the long run, the most effective programs to eradicate poverty among older Boston residents and the population at large will be those that strike at the structural roots of poverty. The availability of quality day care at an affordable price, the promotion of flex-time policies and more liberal maternal leave policies could be major long-term factors in lessening the effects of social roles on the work histories of women. Similarly, equal pay for equal work (regardless of sex and race) and equal access to educational and job opportunities for minorities could eliminate many of the forces that currently ensure that those who are poor during their working years remain destitute in retirement. 🐼

Notes

1. James H. Schulz, *The Economics of Aging*, 4th ed. (Dover, MA: Auburn House, 1988); Daniel Radner, "Changes in the Money Income of the Aged and Nonaged, 1967–1983," *Studies in Income Distribution* (Washington, DC: Office of Research, Statistics, and International Policy, Social Security Administration, 1986).
2. William Crown and James Schulz, *Private Expenditures Related to the Support of Younger and Older Persons Not in the Labor Force* (Waltham, MA: Policy Center on Aging, Brandeis University, 1987).
3. Phillip Longman, "Justice Between Generations," *Atlantic* (June 1985): 73–81.
4. At a national level, this criterion is met by several surveys, most notably the March Current Population Survey.
5. This is significant because policy discussions are often heavily influenced by mean income statistics. For example, it is common to hear child poverty statistics discussed in connection with growth in the average per capita incomes of the elderly (e.g., Samuel Preston, "Children and the Elderly in the U.S.," *Scientific American* 251, no. 6 [December 1984]: 44–49). While there is no denying that child poverty rates are extremely high, the usual implication of such discussions is that expenditures on affluent older persons (such as through Social Security benefits) could be better spent on children in poverty — ignoring the fact that poverty rates among certain segments of the older population are alarmingly high as well.
6. It was not possible to present in Table 2 income statistics differentiated by family status because of sample size limitations. If it were possible to do so, however, the pattern would probably continue to be consistent with the poverty rates in Table 1.
7. Until recently, it was not necessary to involve the spouse in the decision of whether to elect a survivor's benefit in private pensions. Because choosing a survivor's benefit lowers pension

amounts, it was common not to elect a survivor's benefit. Passage of the Retirement Equity Act of 1983 made election of a survivor's benefit the default. Both parties must now agree if the survivor's benefit is to be waived.

8. Schulz, *Economics of Aging*.
9. Prior to the 1972 amendments, Social Security benefits generally kept pace with inflation through ad hoc adjustments by Congress.
10. Anthony Pellechio, "The Effect of the Social Security Retirement Test on the Earnings of Retirement Aged Workers," testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Social Security, Washington, DC (April 1980); Colin D. Campbell and Rosemary G. Campbell, "Conflicting Views on the Effects of Old-Age and Survivor's Insurance on Retirement," *Economic Inquiry* 14 (September 1976): 369–88.
11. Susan Grad, *Income of the Population 55 and Over, 1982* (Washington, DC: Social Security Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1984).
12. The public assistance data in Table 5 include SSI and welfare cash benefits, unemployment insurance, and worker's compensation but exclude in-kind transfers.
13. Table 4, based on the Decennial Census data, indicates that the importance of public assistance increased over 1970–1980. However, the decline in the importance of public assistance indicated by Table 5 is consistent with the findings of other studies. See, for example, Melinda Upp, "Relative Importance of Various Income Sources of the Aged, 1980," *Social Security Bulletin* 46, no. 1 (1983): 3–10; and Jennifer Warlick, "Why Is Poverty After 65 a Woman's Problem?" *Journal of Gerontology* 40, no. 6 (1985): 751–57.
14. This was due to expansion of pension coverage throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, in combination with significant increases in the numbers of vested pension plan participants reaching retirement age in the early 1970s.
15. Upp, "Relative Importance of Various Income Sources"; U.S. Senate, Special Committee on Aging, *America in Transition: An Aging Society* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985).
16. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Retirement Coverage Widespread in Medium and Large Firms, 1985," news release, Washington, DC, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (April 24, 1986).
17. James H. Schulz, Thomas D. Leavitt, Leslie Kelly, and John Strate, *Private Pension Benefits in the 1970s* (Bryn Mawr, PA: McCahan Foundation for Research in Economic Security, 1982); Cynthia Dittmar and Elizabeth Meier, "Levels and Sources of Retirement Income," in *Coming of Age: Toward a National Retirement Income Policy* (Washington, DC: President's Commission on Pension Policy, 1981).
18. Merton Bernstein and Joan Bernstein, *Social Security: The System That Works* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).
19. David Kennell and John Shields, "The Potential Impact of the Senate Finance Committee Tax Reform Proposals on Retirement Incomes in Future Years," Washington, DC, ICF Incorporated (1986).
20. Employee Benefit Research Institute, "Issue Brief," Washington, DC, Employee Benefit Research Institute (October 1986).
21. ICF Incorporated, *Old, Alone and Poor*, prepared for the Commonwealth Fund Commission on Elderly People Living Alone, Washington, DC, ICF Incorporated (April 1987).
22. Richard Burkhauser and Karen Holden, *A Challenge to Social Security: The Changing Roles of Women and Men in American Society* (New York: Academic Press, 1982).
23. Schulz, *Economics of Aging*.
24. Schulz, *Economics of Aging*.

25. See, for example, Paul Andrisani, "Effects of Health Problems on the Work Experience of Middle-Aged Men," *Industrial Gerontology*, no. 2 (1977): 97–112; E. Palmore, L. George, and G. Fillenbaum, "Predictors of Retirement," *Journal of Gerontology* 37 (1982): 733–42; H. Parnes, J. Crowley, J. Harrison, L. Less, W. Morgan, F. Mott, and G. Nestel, *Retirement Among American Men* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, D.C. Heath, 1985).
26. Martynas Ycas, "Recent Changes in Health Near the Age of Retirement," presented at the 1986 Annual Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America, Chicago, IL (1986).
27. K. Anderson and R. Burkhauser, "The Retirement-Health Nexus: A New Measure of an Old Puzzle," *Journal of Human Resources* 20, no. 3 (1985): 315–30; U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, *Retirement Income for an Aging Population* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987).
28. Gary Fields and Olivia Mitchell, *Retirement, Pensions, and Social Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984); Gary Burtless and Robert Moffit, "The Effect of Social Security Benefits on the Labor Supply of the Aged," in Henry Aaron and Gary Burtless (eds.), *Retirement and Economic Behavior* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1984).
29. Derived from data presented in Margaret O'Brien, "Demographic Trends in Boston: Some Implications for Municipal Services," *New England Journal of Public Policy* 2, no. 2 (1986): 75–90.
30. SRI International, *Older Worker Employment Comes of Age*, prepared for the National Commission for Employment Policy (Menlo Park, CA: Public Policy Center, SRI International, 1985).
31. As reported in U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, *Developments in Aging: 1984*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985).
32. See, for example, the recommendations of ICF Incorporated, *Old, Alone, and Poor*.
33. A variety of other programs provide economic assistance to poor older persons in the form of in-kind benefits (e.g., food stamps, housing assistance, energy assistance, and Medicaid). All of these programs play a role in improving the economic status of poor older persons, but a discussion of in-kind benefit programs is beyond the scope of this article.
34. John A. Menefee, Bea Edwards, and Sylvester J. Schieber, "Analysis of Nonparticipation in the SSI Program," *Social Security Bulletin* 44, no. 6 (1981): 3–21; Warlick, "Why Is Poverty After 65 a Woman's Problem?"; Linda Drazga, Melinda Upp, and V. Reno, "Low-Income Aged: Eligibility and Participation in SSI," *Social Security Bulletin* 45, no. 6 (1982): 28–35.
35. In addition, James Schulz points out that many income-eligible persons may not participate in SSI because they fail the stringent asset tests of the program. Rectifying this problem would require national legislation to change eligibility criteria with respect to assets. See James H. Schulz, "SSI: Origins, Experience, and Unresolved Issues," in *The Supplemental Security Income Program: A 10-Year Overview*, U.S. Senate, Special Committee on Aging Information Paper (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984): 1–39.
36. Schulz, "SSI: Origins, Experience, and Unresolved Issues."
37. Drazga, Upp, and Reno, "Low-Income Aged."
38. Schulz, "SSI: Origins, Experience, and Unresolved Issues."
39. Drazga, Upp, and Reno, "Low-Income Aged."
40. Thomas Leavitt and James Schulz, *Time to Reform the SSI Asset Test?* (Washington, DC: Public Policy Institute, American Association of Retired Persons, 1988).

Recommended Readings, 1988

Shaun O'Connell

Among the works discussed in this essay:

Vestments, by Alfred Alcorn. 276 pages. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$17.95.

Libra, by Don DeLillo. 456 pages. Viking. \$19.95.

The Radiant Way, by Margaret Drabble. 408 pages. Alfred A. Knopf. \$18.95

Oscar Wilde, by Richard Ellmann. 680 pages. Alfred A. Knopf. \$24.95.

The Tenants of Time, by Thomas Flanagan. 824 pages E. P. Dutton. \$21.95.

Quinn's Book, by William Kennedy. Viking. 289 pages. \$18.95.

Beloved, by Toni Morrison. 275 pages. Alfred A. Knopf. \$18.95.

Good Hearts, by Reynolds Price. Atheneum. 275 pages. \$18.95.

The Bonfire of the Vanities, by Tom Wolfe. 659 pages. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. \$19.95.

Returning: A Spiritual Journey, by Dan Wakefield. 250 pages. Doubleday. \$17.95.

S., by John Updike. 279 pages. Alfred A. Knopf. \$17.95.

As the Church's power to generate and discharge guilt fades, the writer, I suggest — the representative of the dark and inky world of print — has replaced the priest as an admonitory figure.

— John Updike¹

During the Democratic National Convention in July, I was shocked to learn, from an essay by Garry Wills, that Michael Dukakis “is not given to meditation, to reading books for their own sake, to what he dismisses as ‘introspection.’”² Kitty Dukakis said of her husband, “I have never seen him read a novel.”³ The Democratic party's nominee for president evidently feels no need to have his imagination stirred by the art of fiction, by what Henry James called “the great form” and “the great anodyne.”⁴ Dukakis moved toward election day undeterred by introspection's pale cast of thought; he moved, as Wills put it, “toward his chosen target, like a humming bullet.”⁵

Perhaps I should not be shocked, for no recent president, after all, has been a reader of imaginative literature. Dwight Eisenhower read simplistic westerns; John F. Kennedy read Ian Fleming's sportive entertainments of sex and intrigue; Ronald Regan, not widely

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known as a reader, called Tom Clancy's novel *The Hunt for Red October* a good yarn. Each president's preference in subliterate told us much about his personal and political values. Clancy, for example, whose books have also been praised by Caspar Weinberger, wrote perfect parables for the Reagan administration. In August, when Clancy was on the cover of *Newsweek*, Evan Thomas described his "techno-thrillers": "America's warriors are always brave and true, the weapons always work and the 'good guys' always win."⁶ In *Patriot Games*, Clancy's hero Jack Ryan is the prototype for Reagan's hero Oliver North; both men are Marines and are linked to the CIA, and both are charming, uxorious patriots who bend the law to destroy paramilitaries. Unlike North, however, Ryan battles evildoers without the aid of gunrunners, lawyers, a paper shredder, or a sexy secretary. While North in fact was conned by Middle Eastern arms dealers, in the fictional world of *Patriot Games* Ryan and the Prince of Wales join forces to foil Irish terrorists!⁷ How life constantly fails, as Oscar Wilde might say, when it seeks to imitate art.

Still, it is surprising to discover that Michael Dukakis — an articulate, otherwise well read, intelligent man — does not read fiction. Perhaps he has been too busy governing Massachusetts and running for higher office. Or he may not have wished to confront some of the implications raised by serious works of the imagination, works that force us to face mysteries in the world and in ourselves. "Dukakis is enigmatic precisely because he seems to contain no mysteries," concludes Wills.⁸ However, such mysteries should be faced and contained, even by presidents. Therefore, I offer a few suggestions to Michael Dukakis for his postcampaign reading: a personal list of works of fiction and biography that confront mystery and stir wonder.

Along with instruction and delight, reading provides autobiographic revelation: we are what we read. The texts I chose to review, because I liked an author's turn of style or mind, I now discover, gravitate to several large categories:

- Books with a deliberate sense of place, particularly those that focus on cities, places that symbolize the states of several nations: England, Ireland, and America.
- Books with a conscious sense of history.
- Books that show characters in crisis, characters, lost in the woods, who set forth on spiritual quests through symbolically significant places and periods.
- Books that promise enlightenment in worthy prose, ranging from lucid to lyric.

Margaret Drabble's *The Radiant Way* and Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* "do" two great cities of our time, London and New York City, at their apogees, just as these cities commence their decline and fall. Both novels offer representative characters from their respective cultures: upper-middle-class men and women, newly rich or educated, who encounter threats to their station from discontented members of the dispossessed.

The urban natives are restless. In the London of *The Radiant Way* a killer cuts off women's heads. England, too, is headless and heartless.

These were the years of inner city riots, of race riots in Brixton and Toxteth, of rising unemployment and riotless gloom: these were the years of a small war in the Falklands (rather a lot of people dead), and of the Falklands Factor in politics.⁹

In the New York of *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, Manhattan towers gleam while a few miles away the Bronx opens like an abyss. In the fragmented perception of the novel's satirical foil, Sherman McCoy, an investment banker, the Bronx is

— *astonishing*. Utterly empty, a vast open terrain. Block after block — how many? — six? eight? a dozen? — entire blocks of the city without a building left standing. . . . Here and there were traces of rubble and slag. The earth looked like concrete, except that it rolled down this way . . . and up that way . . . the hills and dales of the Bronx . . . reduced to asphalt, concrete, and cinders . . . in a ghastly yellow gloaming.¹⁰

The American wasteland. In Wolfe's New York City and in Drabble's London, class tensions occur on disputed turf. Each novel explores the issue of inheritance. Who owns the city, the nation?

For all their similarities — each novel is a long, straightforward, realistic narrative that places its characters in tense social contexts — these novels approach the art of fiction differently. Wolfe dances, stylishly; Drabble plods, searchingly. Drabble's novel is a work of higher seriousness but less success than Wolfe's deliberately flip satire. Wolfe's novel is a deftly shaped artifice, sly and manipulative, comic and acerbic, while Drabble's novel is blowzy, ruminative, meandering, rich in possibilities, but tatty with loose ends.

The Radiant Way traces the lives of three English women during the early 1980s, the early phase of the Thatcher years: Liz Headleand, Alix Bowen, and Esther Breuer. Each woman comes from the provincial North of England; they met at Cambridge, twenty-five years before the novel opens at the 1979 New Year's Eve party, a party for two hundred guests, hosted by Liz and Charles Headleand. "New Year's Eve, and the end of a decade. A portentous moment, for those who pay attention to portents."¹¹ A novel, then, of portents, loomings, significances, forced and underlined.

Liz, an incorrigible analyst, is a psychiatrist with an office and a vast home in Harley Street. Alix, high-minded, teaches young women in prison. Esther, a dabbler, studies an obscure Renaissance artist and flirts with an Italian anthropologist. Each character has, like her astrological sign, a dominant humor: Liz wants "to understand," Alix wants "to change things," and aesthetic Esther wants "to acquire interesting information."¹² None is successful.

Oxbridge, and all that that term implied, was the route out of the hinterlands for these young women with great expectations. "These three women, it will readily and perhaps with some irritation be perceived, were amongst the *crème de la crème* of their generation."¹³ They blur into a type: "one cannot, really, wholly differentiate these three women."¹⁴ Drabble frets over their fates. What should a woman do?

Drabble is at her most assured when she portrays the Headleand party. Liz mistakenly thinks of the gathering as a farewell party for Charles, who will be going to New York without her, where he will pursue his telecommunications business.

Liz, looking around the confusion she had summoned into being, the scattered earth, the scattered people, the murmuring, the singing, the clustering, thought, yes, this was a party, yes, this was living rather than not living, this was permitted, this was planned disorder, this was cathartic, this was therapeutic, this was admired misrule.¹⁵

Part Molly Bloom, part Clarissa Dalloway, Liz, like all the people at her party, stands at the edge of a rude awakening, a radical turn and falling-off in her life, a coming-of-age.

She suddenly learns that Charles is leaving her for another woman. Personal pains parallel public crises.

At the same time, in “Northam, that figurative northern city” that serves as a counterpoint to London, more temperate celebrations are under way.¹⁶ There, in the village-suburb of Breasbrough, lives Liz’s sister, stuck with her family and her mother, as Liz was not. She celebrates New Year’s Eve with her husband, who is in the wing-mirror business; that is, he manufactures emblems of retrospection. All over England people are looking their last on all things lovely. Old England’s waning traditions are evident in the planned disorder of this New Year’s Eve.

And thus, all over Northam, all over Britain, ill-remembered, confused, shadowy vestigial rites were performed, rites with origins lost in antiquity; Celtic, Pict, Roman, Norse, Anglo-Saxon, Norman, Elizabethan, Hanoverian, Judaic rites: mistletoe dangled from the drawing pins and picture rails, golden stars shone on the Christmas Tree of Prince Albert and geese and haggis and hams lay heavy on the digestion of some, while others laughed themselves silly or sick on rum and coke at the Maid Marian New Year’s Superdisco.¹⁷

Terrible things happen to English men and women in this novel. A young girl wanders “out alone into Vanity Fair, into Sodom and Gomorrah, into Sin City, into the arms of pushers and parasites, pimps and pornographers,” where she is killed.¹⁸ Lives break apart and even nature seems doomed when Liz and Esther see thousands of dead fish in a canal. “‘Maybe it’s a sign of the end of the world,’ said Liz, staring at the poor innocent fish in the hot afternoon; this is where the apocalypse would announce itself.”¹⁹ However, Drabble’s three women cope with their own traumas and carry on into a precarious future, though they know neither where they are going nor why. As these three women, Drabble’s version of Chekhov’s three sisters, walk the fields of Somerset, the sun shines, “with a red radiance. It sinks. Esther, Liz and Alix are silent with attention.”²⁰

What has all of this motion and reflection, by the author and her characters, meant? Drabble, a circumlocutious, ditzy, and overbearing narrator, invokes Jane Austen as a model, for contrast. Both novelists write about class tensions, but Austen could focus on a few families in a country village, in a coherent era, while Drabble has to deal with intersecting lives of directionless characters over greater gaps of time, place, and social station in an age of anxiety. The irony that results from comparing the two novels works to Drabble’s disadvantage. Austen satisfies us with her perfect pitch, clarity of mind, and ironic style. But irritation seems the only reasonable reader response when Drabble admits she cannot control her material. For example, she confides that she has no idea what secret Liz is hiding from herself. “But what is it? Does she know what it is? Do you know what it is? Do I know what it is? Does anybody know what it is?”²¹ Drabble admits that she cannot even remember which characters matter. At one point Drabble introduces a character whom she quickly drops, saying, “forget I mentioned him. Let us return to Liz, Alix, and Esther.”²² All this is meant to be disarming, to authenticate her tentative narrative voice, to reflect in the novel’s presentation the same confusions her representative modern women confront in their lives, but it is also mannered, self-conscious, irritating. The novel, like Liz’s party, offers a design of admired misrule but suffers a nervous breakdown.

Drabble’s title is taken from a child’s primer of the 1930s; it marks the distance her characters have traveled, with pointed irony. Late in her novel, when everything seems to

be coming apart, Liz finds the primer and is drawn to a page that portrays “two children, a boy and a girl, running gaily down (not up) a hill, against a background of radiant thirties sunburst.”²³ *The Radiant Way* is effective at portraying England’s lost age of certainty and a newfound sense of freedom and danger for its citizens, particularly its educated women. However, as her representative women do not know what to do with their lives in post-mod London, Drabble does not know what to do with them. Does anybody know? After invoking a radiant background, *The Radiant Way* runs down (not up) a hill.

Tom Wolfe knows exactly what to do with his antihero in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Wolfe runs him, like a rat through a maze of city streets, to see how much he can take. Sherman McCoy, thirty-eight, cannot live on his yearly income of \$1,000,000. This unreal McCoy seems to have it all, but Wolfe has his numbers; WASP lineage, a Yale degree, a fourteen-room Park Avenue co-op that he bought for \$2,600,000 (\$1,800,000 borrowed), on which he owes “\$21,000 a month in principal and interest, with a million dollar balloon payment due in two years,” a high-risk venture.²⁴ Yet McCoy has spent \$980,000 in the last year. He imagines himself a “Master of the Universe,” but Wolfe contrives an intricate plot to show McCoy as a fool of fortune, a representative man of contemporary New York, “a city boiling over with racial and ethnic hostilities and burning with the itch to Grab It Now.”²⁵

Wolfe treats all this with high irony and low comedy. His mock-heroic style — rhetorical inflation designed to level his characters’ pretensions — shows New Yorkers, from all boroughs, classes, races, and ethnic backgrounds, to be greedy, self-seeking, pretentious, prejudiced residents of Vanity Fair. McCoy conducts his business in the midst of a “rousing sound of the greed storm.”²⁶ “*Make it now!* That motto burned in every heart like myocarditis.”²⁷

The novel’s plot turns on a telling encounter between the powerful and dispossessed of New York. Sherman drives his \$48,000 Mercedes to Kennedy Airport to pick up Maria, his mistress. He ignores the abandoned, stripped cars he passes, emblems of urban ravage. On the Triborough Bridge he thrills at the view of Manhattan, “the Rome, the Paris, the London of the twentieth century, the city of ambition, the dense magnetic rock, the irresistible destination of all those who insist on being *where things are happening* — and he was among the victors!”²⁸ Returning from the airport, he takes a wrong turn and, terrified, drives through the ravaged Bronx. On a ramp his car is blocked by barrels and is approached by two black youths. Sherman and Maria panic. She takes the wheel and hits one of the young men before they escape to “White Manhattan.”²⁹ Out of this ambiguous encounter comes Wolfe’s *American Tragedy*.

However, Wolfe’s plot echoes Fitzgerald more than Dreiser. In *Bonfire*, as in *The Great Gatsby*, a woman drives the opulent car of a wealthy man, with whom she is having an extramarital affair, in the dangerous territory of another class or race. In this valley of ashes setting, each woman commits a hit-and-run accident, striking down a have-not. In each case the woman’s lover gallantly takes the blame and is punished for the crime. Though both authors develop similar incidents to show the callousness of the rich, Fitzgerald treats the event as tragedy, for noble Gatsby is killed by the victim’s husband, while Wolfe treats it as farce, for McCoy, more craven than heroic, becomes the sacrificial victim of those who discover political advantage in, as the mayor says, putting “the Wasp to the wall.”³⁰

A Bronx D.A., up for reelection, spends most of his days prosecuting blacks, so he needs to prosecute McCoy, a rich white man, to win the black vote. An assistant D.A. in

the Bronx is “tired of watching *other people* lead . . . The Life,” so he goes after Sherman.³¹ A corrupt black minister uses the hit-and-run case to gain money and power, manipulating the media. An alcoholic reporter for a scandal sheet, owned by a Murdoch-like publisher, finds his career transformed when the minister uses him to run stories against McCoy. Sherman McCoy becomes enmeshed in the slow but inexorable system of Dickensian “justice” in New York.

Surprisingly, as the walls close in upon him, McCoy grows more genuine. At a cocktail party — he briefly becomes a fashionable conversation piece, an item of reactionary chic — he says, “as soon as you’re caught in the machinery, just the *machinery*, you’ve lost.”³² However, in losing everything, he wins. At the beginning of the novel Sherman is a wimp, bullied by his wife and mistress, even his vile dog, as he sneaks around, vulnerable to loss, buoyed by delusions of grandeur; at the end of the novel he has lost all his emblems of power and he is tough, ready to stand up for himself, in a bizarre world of jail and courts.

For all his wealth and power, before his fall Sherman was an innocent who becomes wise to the ways of the world, a contemporary Joseph Andrews. Indeed, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* — such a cumbersome and sententious title — resembles the picaresque novels of Henry Fielding. Wolfe’s roguish hero, like Fielding’s heroes, has a series of serio-comic encounters that satirize the venality and pretention of his day. Wolfe’s language, like Fielding’s, is full of sportive inflation, though Wolfe avoids Fielding’s chummy direct address, a style of chat-up that attracts Drabble. Rather, Wolfe parodies his characters’ hyperbolic thoughts, as he does when the assistant D.A. thinks about the Bronx County Building, the Bleak House of New York City, as little more than an elaborate “island fortress of the Power, of the white people, like himself, this Gibraltar in the poor Sargasso Sea of the Bronx.”³³

Wolfe’s satirical art depends on stereotypes and caricatures, in the farcical tradition of the picaresque. No ethnic, racial, or regional group escapes his mockery, from the black boys who walk with “a pumping gait known as the Pimp Roll” to the New Yorkers who tell you “Gedoudahere” in their own graceless social discourse.³⁴ The novel is consistently antimob, whether that “mob” be black community activists, the press, or the various sectors of the WASP world. It may be fashionable to repress racial and ethnic slurs in upper-middle-class circles, but this is still how people think, implies Wolfe. On the other hand, the evidence of his plotting and characterizations tends to confirm these stereotypes: his Irish-Americans, for example, not only are called *donkeys*, they act like donkeys. A detective embodies “Irish” traits: vulgarity, bravery, loyalty.³⁵ “Irish machismo — that was the dour madness that gripped them all,” thinks the assistant D.A., with just cause.³⁶

However, the snap and dash of Wolfe’s satire is well worth the price he exacts in offended sensibilities. Wolfe, after all, does not discriminate; he shows us what fools all mortals, at least all New York City mortals, can be. We would not want to be deprived of his take-down of a posh East Side dinner party because he caricatures the guests. (Fitzgerald similarly mocked Gatsby’s partygoers.) All the men are rich and old, but the women fall into two types: thin, older women, “starved to perfection,” and “so-called Lemon Tarts,” younger women “who were the second, third, and fourth wives or live-in girlfriends of men over forty or fifty or sixty (or seventy), the sort of women men refer to, quite without thinking, as *girls*.”³⁷ Indeed, the rich might be different from you and me, but they can be classified and satirized by Wolfe.

At this dinner party, a visitor offers a benediction on the *beau monde*, whose values had

set up Sherman McCoy for his fortunate fall. We can reasonably infer that Wolfe agrees. Lord Buffing, British poet, who is dying of AIDS, tells the assembled guests of the Poe story in which party guests dance with Death.

They are bound together, and they whirl about one another, endlessly, particles in a doomed atom — and what else could the Red Death be but some final stimulation, the *ne plus ultra*? So Poe was kind enough to write the ending for us more than a hundred years ago.³⁸

The Bonfire of the Vanities is Tom Wolfe's camp version of "The Masque of the Red Death."

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison dramatizes the lasting effects of another kind of living death, slavery in America, in a novel set in Ohio more than a hundred years ago. In *The Tenants of Time* Thomas Flanagan meditates on events in Ireland during the last half of the nineteenth century, a period of famine, oppression, and failed rebellion. Both works place the reader inside the minds of the oppressed, American slaves and Irish peasants, and both works, in original fictional structures, brood on the ways the past is remembered. Both works fulfill one of Georg Lukács's central requirements of the "real historical novel": to "rouse the present, which contemporaries would experience as their own prehistory."³⁹ In *Quinn's Book*, something of a historical romp, William Kennedy attempts and achieves less; his novel covers the lives and time of Irish-Americans and other citizens of Albany in the same period.

In "Decay of Lying," Oscar Wilde was perhaps too quick to sacrifice history and fiction to the art of aphorism.

The ancient historians gave us delightful fiction in the form of fact; the modern novelist presents us with dull facts under the guise of fiction.⁴⁰

Morrison, Flanagan, and Kennedy show that the form still has resonant possibilities.

Beloved opens in 1873, in post-Civil War Ohio. The prose-poetry of its narrative weaves backward and forward between that time and the last years of slavery, presenting events from various points of view, through the inclusion of meditations, songs, and stories. The novel centers on Sethe, an escaped slave, and her family. For Sethe the past is, literally, a living, haunting presence. She would agree with the Quentin Compson of *Absalom, Absalom!*, who said, "*maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished.*"⁴¹ Toni Morrison allows the narrative of her novel to follow the dream logic of this proposition. We wonder, as does she, whether Sethe can come to terms with her horrific past — though we see events from her past only in brief, confusing flashes — and then make a new life that will ensure a future for herself, her family, and, by implication, her race, for Sethe is a black earth mother whose nurture is necessary for their survival. The novel is nothing less than a myth that describes the brutal shattering and heroic re-formation of the black family.

Beloved is filled with mystery and magic. Sethe has "to live out her years in a house palsied by the baby's fury at having its throat cut," we learn in the novel's opening pages.⁴² The reader is mystified by this and similar statements, so, as with many Faulkner novels, we read on as much to discover what has happened as to see what will happen. Time past is contained in time present for reader, author, and her heroine, who is as distinguished by her capacity for thought as for action. Sethe wants to forget but cannot. "Her brain was

not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day.”⁴³

Sethe lives with Denver, her daughter, born during her escape from slavery, and Baby Suggs, her mother-in-law, until this old preacher-woman dies. In the course of the novel, Sethe’s painful past comes into focus. She escaped from Sweet Home, the plantation on which she had been enslaved, and joined Baby Suggs, but a slave catcher found Sethe and, rather than have her baby become a slave, Sethe kills the baby; Sethe marked her daughter’s headstone with the name “Beloved.”

Whites might dirty *her* all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing — the part of her that was clean. No undreamable dreams about whether the headless, footless torso hanging in the tree with a sign on it was her husband or Paul A; whether the bubbling-hot girls in the colored-school fire set by patriots included her daughter; whether a gang of whites invaded her daughter’s private parts, soiled her daughter’s thighs and threw her daughter out of the wagon. *She* might have to work the slaughterhouse yard, but not her daughter.⁴⁴

Later, Sethe’s sons ran off, to escape “the ghost that tried them so.”⁴⁵ Denver fears Sethe. “I love my mother but I know she killed one of her own daughters, and tender as she is with me, I’m scared of her because of it.”⁴⁶

Then Paul D, a former slave from Sweet Home, arrives. Paul D has memories of being chained in a box, with other slaves, in a ditch of rising water, after he tried to kill a white man, but he wants to put that past behind him and make a future with haunted Sethe. The trauma of her history emerges, under his gentle hand, little by little. Sethe tells Paul D that white boys held her down and took her milk when she was pregnant with Denver. However, Sethe cannot be released until she faces her worst memory: the brief life and sad death of Beloved. Magically, a young woman then appears; she calls herself Beloved, the living presence of what Sethe’s dead daughter would have been, a ghost made visible by Sethe’s compelling need. Morrison moves her plot into realms of mystery. “Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved’s eyes.”⁴⁷ Beloved, embodying the dead’s grip on the living, soon holds everyone in the house under her spell as daughter, sister, and seductress.

After Beloved’s eerie appearance, the novel settles into a struggle of wills for the possession of Sethe. Paul D holds out the promise of a renewed family life, but Sethe must come to terms with all her daughters, actual and metaphoric. Denver at first allies herself with Beloved, “this sister-girl.”⁴⁸ Then Denver shifts sides, works to release her mother from the thrall of the living dead by mobilizing the community of black women. When they learn the news — “Sethe’s dead daughter, the one whose throat she cut, had come back to fix her” — this community chorus of thirty black women sets out to save Sethe with whatever magic or Christian prayer they have in the way of spiritual cures. Sethe and Denver leave Beloved and join the singing black women. Finally Beloved is forgotten; Sethe forgives herself.⁴⁹

Beloved is a spiritual parable. Under horrifying conditions, a mother kills her daughter to keep her from experiencing slavery, a fate worse than death. Sethe needs all the help she can get, mainly from women, white and black, to survive, then to exorcise this appalling past. Then, with a renewed family, she can carry on, live for her own and her race’s future.

However, this analysis of *Beloved* simplifies and overclarifies, perhaps even distorts the experience of reading the novel, for Toni Morrison has created a work that releases readers from the world as it is usually known and plunges them into a world where mysterious and dreadful things are commonplace, as ordinary as slavery in America. The novel may

lack final coherence — Sethe's murder of Beloved and her dead child's reappearance are never wholly explained — but it resonates, in Morrison's evocative prose, with significance and wonder.

Ireland, its history and its imagery, is a challenge to the restorative imagination for Thomas Flanagan, whose two novels, *The Year of the French* (1979) and *The Tenants of Time* (1988), focus on obscure but crucial moments in Irish history: the Mayo rising of 1798 and the West Cork Fenian rising of 1867.⁵⁰ His novels spread out from those spots of time, backward and forward, to compose a compelling and richly detailed vision of Irish history as fragmented, ironic, nightmarish, tragic, and, on occasion, ennobling. To accomplish this, Flanagan uses the full resources of the art of fiction: a rhetorical command of meditative, evocative language; a range and depth of character types; and, most important, a mastery of the articulation and manipulation of various points of view, voices that reflect and refract the many histories of Ireland, from bogside peasants to Anglo-Irish landlords — those, then as now, who create, in choral counterpoint, separate Irelands, as much from their imaginations as from their observations.

In *The Tenants of Time* Flanagan traces, through imagined and historical characters, the root and branch of Irish life in the latter half of the nineteenth century, his hidden Ireland. Flanagan dramatizes public history: the famine background; emigration; the Fenian rebellion in Kilpeder, a West Cork village, an event that passed “from grubby fact into legend, myth, a constellation in the heavens,” according to one of its participants, an ironic village schoolmaster; then the Land Wars; finally, Parnell's rise and fall.⁵¹ Further, Flanagan makes credible the private worlds of memorable Irish citizens, whose secret lives counterpoint great events.

This novel opens in the united effort of Catholics to fight British imperialism during the Fenian risings of the 1860s. They fail, but Catholics join with Anglo-Irish Protestants, as Michael Davitt and Charles Stewart Parnell combined forces, to win large concessions during and after the Land Wars; they nearly win Home Rule. However, the fall of Parnell in 1890 turns the Irish against each other. All of this public drama has its private parallels and consequences, particularly for the young men who took up arms in 1867, in Kilpeder, the imaginative center of this novel; these representative Irishmen then found and lost their ways through subsequent, turbulent events, illustrating the meandering course of Irish history.

A dedicated and sensitive archeologist, Flanagan unearths, sorts, reassembles, and, through a leap of the imagination, restores life to these long-gone times of “dark passions,” when Ireland moved, despite its failed rebellion and lost leader, from a medieval to a modern society, from rule by lords of the manor to management by the new gentry: not rebels, but Catholic, middle-class “gombeen” men of business.⁵² Flanagan refracts these events, great and small, through the mind of an Anglo-Irish historian, who, after the turn into the twentieth century, tries to reconstruct the buried or distorted past, link the circuits of logic and responsibilities. “In England,” reflects Patrick Prentiss,

history was a benign sea creature, its movements sluggish and elaborate, its girth expanding layer by layer, iridescent plates. Irish history, his own history, was scraps, fragments, the tumbled stones of ruined abbeys, castles.⁵³

Finally, Prentiss can make no sense of events that began in a Kilpeder skirmish and climaxed in Parnell's funeral procession. Bound by his class perspective and blocked from crucial knowledge — the shadow of a gunman obscures his view of the informer, those central archetypes in any modern myth of Ireland — Prentiss finds no revealing

pattern. Prentiss comes to agree with Hugh, the schoolmaster, who says that history is a poem — “a whim, a trope, as the poets would say. A flight of fancy” — with all sorts of links, but no “reason or law or design.”⁵⁴ However, the reader, who can see these years from all the angles of vision that Flanagan evokes, knows better than Prentiss or Hugh. The chronology of *Tenants* begins in a pathetic expense of spirit — the Kilpeder rising by idealist Catholic lads — and ends in a tragic, absurdist murder — one of the rebels kills another — a waste of shame. While characters cannot see beyond their own conditioned perspectives, the novel becomes an informing parable. That is, more effectively than individual memories or historical inquiries, fiction integrates and illuminates the past, foreshadows the future.

Patrick Prentiss, like Faulkner’s Quentin Compson — each character quests through consciousness for his personal and regional identity — treats history as a cryptogram to be solved. Hugh sees history as a poem and a secret; Lionel Forrester, a gentleman novelist, supplies the Big House angle: in 1904, he says, “the events of the eighties are long distant, of course, but here memories cling to the soil itself, almost, and the very rocks and trees remember.”⁵⁵ Finally, Kilpeder, like each of its citizens, has its own story to tell, its own imposing power, its own sense of the past. *The Tenants of Time*, then, is more than a historical romance. As in the historical fictions of Stendhal and Tolstoy, Flanagan’s novel meditates on the ways we know what we think we know. It foreshadows the way we live now. If, as Flanagan says, there is “no solution” to Ireland’s troubles, past and present, his fiction shows that victories in Ireland are won through the actions of art, not politics.

Though the hero of *Quinn’s Book*, Daniel Quinn, gets what he wants — the love of Maud, a beautiful young woman — and William Kennedy fulfills his intentions — to write a historical saga of Albany — no one is victorious in this lesser example of historical fiction. The point and purpose of the novel are never made clear. Kennedy’s picaresque hero is never truly involved in his era and its events. Quinn moves through his times like a tourist, reflecting Kennedy’s own detachment from the circumstances of his novel. The combination of passionate engagement and imaginative release that made Kennedy’s *Ironweed* so wonderful is missing in this campy, facetious, stylistically showy novel.

Both Quinn and Kennedy work up only a passing interest, for example, in the flood of Irish immigrants who arrive in Albany during the 1850s. Quinn writes to Maud about them; he tours Canal Street, the neighborhood called Gander Bay, “a place of dread and danger, of woe and truculence.”⁵⁶ He witnesses the battle between the Irish and the Know Nothings. However, Dan never feels one of them, nor does Kennedy place him in a meaningful Irish-American context. He sets his hero apart from history. Unlike the victimized Irish, Quinn controls his own fate. “I was not destined to be a passive pawn of exterior forces.”⁵⁷ While they try merely to survive, he is on a romantic quest for “the verification of freedom.”⁵⁸ Soon the homeless Irish are driven out of the city and out of the novel’s frivolous plot, which resumes its romps through melodramatic and farcical matters: rescues, seductions, and resurrections.

Book One, “A Cataclysm of Love: Albany, Winter & Spring 1849–1850,” follows just that pattern. The novel opens in December 1849 on the scene of a river crossing by ferry skiff, from Albany to Greenbush, by Magdalena Colon (La Ultima), “a woman whose presence turned men into spitting, masturbating pigs.”⁵⁹ When the skiff sinks in a storm, Daniel Quinn — he is fifteen, an orphan, and his family has been swept away by cholera — rescues one of the shipwrecked. While his master, John the Bawn, rescues La Ultima, though she is presumed drowned, Quinn saves the lively young Maud (age thirteen).

(He loves her all his life, but it takes until 1864 and the novel's final page before they make love. This is a novel with a climax!)

If storm and rescues were not enough for an opening plot move, more fantastic things occur. "An instant Albany iceberg that never was before and probably never will be again" appears.⁶⁰ The central characters, living and dead, retire to the eerie mansion of Mrs. Hillegond Staats. There we witness a lewd and ludicrous resurrection, when randy John mounts the corpse of La Ultima, who, like Finnegan at his wake, wakes to join the fun. This opening sequence is a black humor fairy tale: an apparent drowning, a rescue of maiden in distress, a sudden eruption of nature, the return to a witch's house, necrophilia, and resurrection. At this point, all of the novel's seriousness of purpose disappears. When Toni Morrison brings *Beloved* back to life she is articulating the terms of a myth — to live, freed blacks must bury their dead — but when William Kennedy brings La Ultima back to life with intercourse he shows that he is only fooling around.

Quinn's Book follows the pattern of conventional historical romances. Love preoccupies his characters in the novel's foreground, while large historical events serve as background counterpoint to their thwarted passions: the settlement of the Dutch, the condition of the Irish immigrants, the underground railroad, a cholera plague, the Civil War. Though Kennedy includes some vivid descriptions of these events, each is quickly dropped so we can get back to the coming of age of Daniel Quinn, the embodiment of innocence and wonder.

I was bewildered. Nothing seemed to conclude. I was in the midst of a whirlwind panorama of violence and mystery, of tragedy and divine frenzy that mocked every effort at coherence.⁶¹

Finally, *Quinn's Book* is about its own making, the effort to tame the fantastic with words, as is made clear when Dan becomes a writer, Kennedy's alter ego. Another character writes a Pynchonian book about secret societies. Dan is grateful that he revealed "the significance of the word," for he was "a maestro of language, a champion of the heroic sentence."⁶² Making this his own goal, Dan, like Kennedy, uses style for its own performance possibilities, not as a plot conveyer — never a Kennedy strength — or a revelation of character and value. The novel is an exercise in imaginative association, the making of metaphor. Dan is fascinated by "linkage":

and from the moment I was able to read that word I became a man compelled to fuse disparate elements of this life, however improbable the joining, this done in a quest to impose meaning on things whose very existence I could not always verify: a vision, for instance, of a young girl holding a human skull with a sweetly warbling red bird trapped inside, the bird visible through the skull's eye sockets.⁶³

This trite image, associated with bad film treatments of Poe stories, hardly justifies his claims for "linkage." *Quinn's Book* disappoints because Kennedy's imagination, so vital in his Albany trilogy,⁶⁴ fails him. The linkages between characters and events, between style and subject, between past and present are at once extravagant and weak. This novel, like that instant Albany iceberg, never was before and never should be again.

If fiction portrays characters, derived from the novelist's imagination, characters whose crises and quests illuminate our lives, then biography is a closely related form, for it describes significant characters, derived from history, whose lives serve as models and fall

into informing patterns. The literary biographer tracks his subject's life but also examines the mystery of his translations of life into art. Several admirable literary biographies have recently appeared. I recommend Scott Donaldson's *John Cheever: A Biography* for its thoroughness in developing the details of the enigmatic writer's life, particularly the destructive elements, bisexuality and alcohol, of his worst years. However, Cheever turned his life around, stopped drinking, and wrote two more books before he died. John Updike affirmed Cheever's "willed act of rebirth" of his final seven years at memorial services in Norwell, Massachusetts, after Cheever's death in June 1982.⁶⁵

Garry O'Connor's *Sean O'Casey: A Life* also presents a writer whose life was a series of rebirths that empowered his art. "Sean O'Casey, slum dramatist and guttersnipe, hob-nail-booted labourer and communist freethinker, who disdained a tie and thumbed his nose as conventional bourgeois behavior, painstakingly created himself out of the real life John Casey."⁶⁶ Cheever and O'Casey, we learn, were driven to create myths of themselves as passionately as they were dedicated to their arts.

One of the great examples of literary biography, about one of the most inventive literary self-creators, appeared in 1988: Richard Ellmann's *Oscar Wilde*, amplified by Ellmann's *Four Dubliners*, essays on the lives and arts of Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, and Samuel Beckett. Ellmann's achievement comes as no surprise, for he has, of course, written a first-rate biography of W. B. Yeats and set the standard in the form of literary biography with his life of James Joyce.⁶⁷ What did come as a shock was Ellmann's recent death, a loss to the world of letters only slightly mitigated by the legacy of his achievements. At the end of his life, Yeats acknowledged that man could not know the truth, but he might embody it. Richard Ellmann's works embody the truths of many significant Irish lives.

Ellmann places his subjects in informing contexts of family and society, so we see his Irish writers shaping their lives against strong cultural pressures. Of his four dissimilar Dubliners, for example, Ellmann discovers a common core of values, derived from their similar urban backgrounds.

They posit and challenge their own assumptions, they circle from art to anti-art, from delight to horror, from acceptance to renunciation. That they should all come from the same city does not explain them, but they share with their island a tense struggle for autonomy, a disdain for occupation by outside authorities, and a good deal of inner division.⁶⁸

It might come as a surprise to some to think of Oscar Wilde — who said "My Irish accent was one of the many things I forgot at Oxford" — as a self-defined Irishman.⁶⁹ But his mother, Lady Wilde, who called herself "Speranza" in her tracts, and his father, William Wilde, a famous surgeon, were both Irish nationalists who infused their son with a love of his native place.⁷⁰ Though Oscar Wilde composed himself into the persona of the quintessential Londoner, he always remained a loyal Irishman, with republican sympathies. For example, after the Invincibles killed Lord Frederick Cavendish and another British official on May 6, 1882, in Phoenix Park, murders that shocked most Englishmen and Irishmen, Wilde was not apologetic. "We forget how much England is to blame. She is reaping the fruit of seven centuries of injustice."⁷¹

Ellmann's emphasis on Wilde's Irishness helps explain the playwright's ambivalence toward English culture, to which he pandered and which, in turn, he parodied. When Wilde left Trinity College, Dublin, for Oxford, he entered enemy territory, laying siege with his best weapons, his disarming persona and his powers of language. "For Irishmen, Oxford is to the mind what Paris is to the body," says Ellmann.⁷² At Oxford Wilde, attend-

ing to the conflicting messages of Pater and Ruskin, became an aesthete, though he also flirted with Catholicism, “the perfumed belief.”⁷³ (In 1878 Wilde nearly entered the Catholic church. Later he would insist he had no religion: “I am an Irish Protestant.”)⁷⁴ At Oxford and throughout his life, Wilde enjoyed “half-choice” more than commitment, Ellmann makes clear.⁷⁵ Wilde’s meteoric rise and fall in London are made more explicable by Ellmann’s shrewd understanding of the aggressiveness beneath Wilde’s wonderful wit. “I’ll be a poet, a writer, a dramatist,” insisted Wilde. “Somehow or other, I’ll be famous, and if not famous, notorious.”⁷⁶ He became, of course, famous *and* notorious.

Wilde’s homosexuality, for Ellmann, was more than a personal inclination; it was also an affirmation of the man hiding behind the mask of the divine Oscar, the dandified face with which he met the world. In “The Truth of Masks” Wilde articulates the principle of paradox behind his art, as it is artfully embodied in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and his life: “A truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true.”⁷⁷ Homosexuality allowed Wilde to live a life that doubled and redoubled in complexities, like those intricate misunderstandings in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. “Contradictoriness was his orthodoxy,” says Ellmann.⁷⁸ Associate of Parnell and Gladstone, solicitor of street boys, husband and father, Wilde, like Whitman, whom he met and kissed, contained multitudes. “Homosexuality fired his mind. It was the major stage in his discovery of himself. . . . Ironical frivolity, with dark insinuation, was the compound through which he now sought to express himself.”⁷⁹

Wilde’s life was a drama in the mode of excess. “Where there is no extravagance there is no love, and where there is no love there is no understanding,” wrote Wilde.⁸⁰ His greatest triumph, the production of *Earnest* in 1895, occurred at the beginning of his long fall: the two trials that would result in his conviction and imprisonment (two years at hard labor) for illegal homosexual acts, followed by his early death, in 1900, at age forty-six.

It is Ellmann’s challenging contention that “Wilde is one of us.”⁸¹ But few could claim to match Wilde’s talent for paradoxical epigram. In “The Decay of Lying” he wrote, “life is the mirror, and art the reality.”⁸² Few possess his sly wit. Greeting Bernard Berenson, a disciple, Wilde said, “Tell me at once. Are you living with the Twenty Commandments?”⁸³ Few possess his courage, acknowledged by Yeats, another disciple: “He was an unfinished sketch of a great man, and showed great courage and manhood amid the collapse of his fortunes.”⁸⁴ Just here is where Ellmann discovers Wilde’s contemporaneity, for Ellmann’s Wilde, too, was an unfinished sketch, a man who dangled between worlds — Ireland and England, heterosexual and homosexual, aristocratic and base — like a high-wire walker, testing his limits until he was shaken down. The victim of a “berserk passion” for unworthy men, a passion that he did nothing to resist, Wilde set himself up as a target for those, like Henry James, who saw him as an “unclean beast.”⁸⁵ Romantically naive, Wilde thought he could live life on his own terms but discovered he could not; he then accepted his fate with dignity. Through it all he produced one perfect play, *Earnest*, another nearly as good, *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, and several more that are worthy. His criticism, which made the critic into a cocreator of the text, which saw works of art as self-contained artifices, still has influence — “The primary aim of the critic is to see the object as it is not” — and his confession, *De Profundis*, has moments of grandeur.⁸⁶ It only speaks well of us, then, when Ellmann says that Wilde belongs “to our world more than to Victoria’s.”⁸⁷

Ellmann treats Wilde’s life and times with intelligence and sympathy. Though he admires Wilde, Ellmann is particularly eloquent on the pains Wilde inflicted on his wife, a mystified, loving, and forgiving woman, dead at age forty. Perhaps Ellmann claims too

much for Wilde as a moral thinker and an influence when he writes that “Wilde was a moralist, in a school where Blake, Nietzsche, and even Freud were his followers.”⁸⁸ However, inspired by Wilde’s exhilarating style, Ellmann’s book flashes with epigrammatic insights that place the reader in sympathetic but critical relation to Wilde. Here is Ellmann, for example, on Wilde’s marriage to Constance Lloyd in 1884: “A wife would save him from the moralists, and a rich one from the moneylenders.”⁸⁹ Three years younger than Wilde, Constance was “intelligent, capable and independent,” though, Ellmann adds, “she could never quite compass his strain of near-nonsense.”⁹⁰ On Wilde’s tragic and silly passion for Lord Alfred Douglas, Ellmann writes with understanding, disapproval, and Wildean wit. “Wilde wanted a consuming passion; he got it and was consumed by it.”⁹¹ Douglas claimed, melodramatically, “I am the love that dare not speak its name,” but Ellmann deflates his pretensions by adding a qualification: “In fact, Douglas spoke about it a good deal.”⁹²

Wilde once told Yeats, “I think a man should invent his own myth,” which they both did.⁹³ Ellmann respects Wilde’s myth of himself but reaches beyond Wilde’s persona as the aesthete who became the victim of Victorian hypocrisy. Ellmann grants Wilde the dignity of complicity in his own fate. In this sense, Richard Ellmann makes Oscar Wilde one of us.

This was a literary season in which several works of fiction and confession focused narratives on exemplary lives, significant places, and informing historical moments. In *Good Hearts*, a novel by Reynolds Price, set in the contemporary South, a man, twenty-eight years married, suddenly leaves his wife and sets out on a search for he knows not what. In *Vestments*, a novel by Alfred Alcorn, set in Boston, a young man sacrifices his positions and possessions to be free to look for God. In *Returning: A Spiritual Journey*, a confession by Dan Wakefield that climaxes in Boston, another writer achieves a willed act of re-birth.⁹⁴

In “At the Heart,” an essay first published in 1987, Reynolds Price identifies himself as an orthodox Christian: born, reared, and still believing. His statement of faith has implications, aesthetic and behavioral, for his fiction. “I believe finally that the history of our universe is an infinite *story* told to himself and, in part, to us by the sole omnipotent creative power.” The world is a stage and we are actors playing our assigned roles in a quasi-allegorical drama:

the lethal agonies of cruelty and disaster that are such steady features of the plot are apparently didactic, literally educational — intended by God to enrich and strengthen us, to deepen both our humanity and our comprehension of his unfathomable power and diversity and our own inexplicable failures of mind and body.⁹⁵

Life, for Price, is a gradual realization of God’s purpose of our missions. Thus Price’s novels move from realism to allegory, as his characters’ random lives are shaped by his (His?) designing hand and they come to realize their destinies. Price’s fictions begin in the landscape of *Tobacco Road*, his characters possessed by lust, but end in the allegorical territory of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, his characters in quest of God or reconciliation with the world they have fled. This design, with individual variations, also informs the prose narratives of Alcorn and Wakefield. The works by these writers deal with heroes who have won their places in the world but now are lost in the woods, characters who set out on quests, who hit bottom, who shed their old lives, who transcend the world or return to it

renewed. They are versions of Joseph Campbell's modern hero who finally seeks the voice of God within his own heart. Campbell concludes *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* with this apt injunction: "And so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal — carries the cross of the redeemer — not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair."⁹⁶

Rosacoke (Rosa) and Wesley Beaver, who appeared in Price's first novel, *A Long and Happy Life*, reappear in *Good Hearts*, after twenty-eight years of marriages.⁹⁷ Suddenly Wesley leaves Rosa in Raleigh and goes to Nashville. While he is away, Rosa is assaulted by a man who thinks women want him to rape them. Price's characters immediately realize that Wesley is on a quest. When Rosa returns to the family home, Rosa's elder brother says that Wesley's "leaving is a sermon, commencement address and the twenty-third damned psalm all together."⁹⁸ Rosa realizes that their marriage was not enough: "we turned out not to know what to do alone together."⁹⁹ Wesley feels dead at heart, so he seeks renewal. Rosa has a new life thrust on her by the rapist.

When Wesley's consciousness takes over the narrative, we learn that he thought he heard God's voice telling him he was nearing death, so he left Rosa. In a motel room he reads the Gideon Bible and realizes "he was meant to have lighted his own light. The tower and the spiral ladder were provided, the mirror was polished in place, he had never lit the fire."¹⁰⁰ He blames Rosa, who worshiped him, for missing his chance. Another Rabbit Angstrom — like Updike's hero of *Rabbit, Run*, Wesley will return to his marriage — Wesley finds God embodied in a sexy woman: Joyce, a twenty-six-year-old radiology technician who lives in her trailer, which she bought with money from her second divorce. Their sexual union is wondrous and intense, until she suddenly tells Wesley to get a divorce or get out.

Gratefully, Wesley returns to his given life, the life Rosa never wanted to leave. Even the rapist, a character out of Flannery O'Connor's Gothic world of twisted faith, comes to realize that Rosa does not need rescue from her ordinary existence. Both husband and wife have encountered extramarital shocks; Rosa and Wesley are finally ready to renew their covenant, to accept the world as it is and their places in it. After he phones Joyce to tell her he will not be back, Wesley meditates on his suddenly spirit-infused life and reaffirmed bond with Rosa:

Whatever the sky was — at least the cause of birth and death (all hardness and ease) — it had secretly honored the unlikely choice of two normal creatures to work again at a careful life. They could not know they were safe till their endings, which would be hard and slow a long way off. This modest house would be home till then. It had room enough for the small calm pleasures that would not be rare. They would live here till death. Death would find them with ease.¹⁰¹

The parable of Wesley and Rosa confirms Price's vision of life as a series of chastening encounters that painfully reveal God's purpose. His characters, however, are not doctrinaire Christians. These are good country people, living in a region that has obliterated much of its rural, Southern roots, groping in the half-darkness of their lives for spiritual light. They find there is no world elsewhere more blessed and wondrous than the world, for all its ordinariness, that God has already granted them. As Dan Wakefield wrote, in his review of *Good Hearts*, "this everyday sense of the sacred, of religion as a natural element of life, is present in all of Price's work, and gives it a dimension that is lacking in the cramped landscape of most contemporary fiction."¹⁰² Price's brooding, evocative prose

honors and elevates his characters' quests; his metaphorical richness empowers his characters' beliefs that extraordinary worlds exist, somewhere, even near at hand. Finally, Wesley and Rosa light their own lights through their physical and spiritual union.

When he returns, Wesley tells Rosa, "I'm trying to mend something good I broke."¹⁰³ In Alfred Alcorn's *Vestments* Sebastian (Bass) Taggart, a man in the midst of a life of loud desperation, is trying to break his tawdry ties so he can find something good. Sebastian is a dangling man, despite his flashy job as an editorial writer for a Boston television station, his classy girl, his smashing condo, along Cambridge's Memorial Drive, which he shares with his significant other and their postmodern furnishings. "They were, he was loath to admit, the quintessential young urban professionals."¹⁰⁴ She wants marriage and a baby, but he cannot commit. "Marriage. It would be like death, living death. He'd never be free again."¹⁰⁵ Instead, he seeks transformation through faith in God. His quest begins in calculation — he dons a clerical collar to reassure his dying aunt, who, in her dotage, thinks he is a priest — but ends in a sincere imitation of Christ.

The world is too much with Sebastian, late and soon, though Alcorn firmly *places* his hero in contemporary Boston, where ordinary things have a nimbus of spiritual possibilities. Boston offers Bass a world of history (the Freedom Trail), wealth (a posh office), sex, and style, a consumer's paradise, though he sees it as a sterile trap.

Sebastian turned from the faces on his desk [photos from the "Smile of Boston" contest, which he judged] to gaze down through the sealed Thermopane at the tableau of lowlife moving in the slow motion of distance in front of the Old State House. In the mellow sunlight of late summer, derelicts, panhandlers, the ambulatory crazy, and pimps and pushers up from the Combat Zone mingled with the tourists who had come to walk the Freedom Trail. Sebastian envied the bums their freedom right then. They hadn't sentenced themselves to the voluntary servitude of an office job, to a life term of canned existence in a cubicle with Styrofoam ceiling and fluorescent lights. Well, not him, damn it, not him. He was his own freedom trail. He was going to be rich. Rich and free. He got up and began to pace like a cat in its cage.¹⁰⁶

At this point Bass thinks he will inherit vast sums, money that will make him "free," from his aunt, whose terminal illness drives him to impersonate a priest. Garbed as a priest, Bass sees a different world. In the Museum of Fine Arts he views painting with a fresh eye, looking for meaning and wonder. Gauguin's *D'ou'venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Ou'allons-nous?* speaks directly to his life: "Where do we come from? Where are we? Where are we going?" Childe Hassam's *Boston Common at Twilight* "made him feel nostalgic for a Boston he had never known."¹⁰⁷ Bass seeks a transcendent world of wholeness, harmony, and radiance beyond the boundaries of Boston or any actual place.

In a long, sometimes hilarious and always painful process, which Alcorn details with artful care and compassion, Sebastian moves through states of euphoria and depression, altruism and alcoholism, before he makes his separate peace with the world and comes into a greater inheritance: possession of his true life, a sense of divine direction.

Vestments, it might be said, is an AIDS era novel, in full retreat from the sexual revolution, driven by the newly rediscovered satisfactions of renunciation. But it is more. Alcorn offers a plausible hero who wants to put the world — at least the world of achievements, possessions, and status pretensions — behind him. Though he might never make it, he hopes to emulate Sister Vincia, mother superior of a nursing home, a model of selflessness, who told Bass, "I do what I do in the imitation of Christ and the worship of

almighty God.”¹⁰⁸ Other American men, appearing in purposeful prose narratives, heard and took to heart similar words.

Though autobiography rather than fiction, Dan Wakefield’s *Returning* follows a similar pattern. Again the central character learns by going where he has to go, sets forth on a quest to discover his purpose in God’s design. Wakefield’s book originated in a course on “religious autobiography” in the King’s Chapel parish house in Boston.

It was there that for the first time I began to understand how my life could be viewed as a spiritual journey as well as a series of secular adventures of accomplishment and disappointment, personal and professional triumph and defeat. I started to see the deeper connections and more expansive framework offered the sense of our small daily drama in relation to the higher meaning that many people call God.¹⁰⁹

Wakefield’s journey of consciousness takes him back to the point of crack-up, when all seemed lost. He was forty-eight in 1980, in Hollywood, drinking heavily, in a failed relationship, out of luck and out of hope. On an impulse of nostalgia for a place in which he had once been happy, he suddenly returned to Boston. “Walking the brick streets of my old neighborhood on Beacon Hill, I felt in balance again with the universe, and a further pull to what seemed the center of it, the source of something I was searching for, something I couldn’t name that went far beyond the satisfaction of scenery or local color.”¹¹⁰ In Boston Wakefield found sanctuary, home, the presence of grace.

Wakefield’s meditation tracks two time lines. In the foreground we witness his physical and spiritual recovery — he exercises, diets, and renounces alcohol — to gradual involvement in King’s Chapel’s version of the transcendent life. (Alcorn’s hero moves through a particularly Catholic landscape, where guilt, atonement, and the sins of the flesh are well-marked routes. Wakefield’s “road map” of his life is marked by the signs of American Protestantism: baptism, loss of faith, false gods, and rebirth.)¹¹¹ In the background we witness Wakefield’s picaresque life history from his youth in Indianapolis to his coming of age in New York, where he learned to scorn religions and learned to write. Sex, alcohol, and psychotherapy, a holy trinity for many of his generation, were his anodynes for life’s pains. (His chapter “The Couch” on his prolonged and unsatisfying involvement with two psychoanalysts, whose only contribution to his mental health was to urge him to “go on” talking, is at once comic and painful.)¹¹² Though Wakefield was a successful writer of essays, novels, and screenplays, something was missing until he found his *place*, in Boston, in church. He even discovered that one of his ancestors, John Wakefield, is buried in Boston’s Granary Burial Ground, a sign that the author had arrived at his true home. “Knowing that the ancestors of my genealogical family were in the very ground of the place to which I had been so naturally drawn seemed part of the whole intricate pattern of my journey and return.”¹¹³

Returning is a successful confession, for it is guided by a sustaining vision that draws the fragments and disjunctions of a man’s life into a coherent design. In a previous autobiographical statement — written in the mid-1960s, when Wakefield thought he could sustain himself on his talents, with a little help from his drinking friends — he had developed a different persona, more disparate and dissolute. Presenting himself in the third person in *Between the Lines*, Wakefield invited readers to “see him go then, spinning like a top toward the muddle-headed events of his time, botched and blemished and slightly suicidal, romantic sentimental idealist with a wild and penetrating giggle; bemused and often bourbon-filled, I give you, between his printed lines, your reporter.”¹¹⁴ In *Returning*, the mature

Wakefield presents his misadventures with a wit that does not mitigate the seriousness of his life and literary missions: to see the apparently chaotic events of his life in “the whole intricate pattern.” *Returning* shows Dan Wakefield, guided by faith, on the line of a coherent life.

In our time, self-help groups flourish, people cheerily confess astonishing things — deeds for which, not long ago, they might have been arrested — on television and radio talk shows, and New Age mystics fill sports arenas with their version of “the salvatory fads that sweep America like foreign flus,” as the cynical hero of *Vestments* puts it.¹¹⁵ Actress Shirley MacLaine, in *Out on a Limb* and other autobiographical writings, has had wide success at promoting faith in reincarnation. Such works have drawn telling criticisms.¹¹⁶ Perhaps, though, it is too easy to dismiss the authentic needs for community and salvation behind these often bizarre manifestations.

Certainly there is no doubt about the seriousness of intent behind the books of Price, Alcorn, and Wakefield, narratives in which muddled central characters bravely try to change their lives. These books articulate, with requisite art and thought, literary parables in which representative American men and women seek certainty at a time when the center has not held.

John Updike’s *S.*, a novel that echoes Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, combines a sensitivity to place with a sense of history; both of these elements help shape the character and quest of the novel’s heroine, a latter-day Hester Prynne. Updike’s epigraph, containing two citations from *The Scarlet Letter*, defines the concerns of *S.* One stresses Hester’s beauty and dignity as she awaits judgment; the other points up the way she has translated passion and feeling into thought: “The world’s law was no law for her mind.”¹¹⁷ Again we see a character in the midst of life, in crisis, searching for certainty.

In his trilogy of novels based on *The Scarlet Letter* — *A Month of Sundays*, *Roger’s Version*, and *S.* — and also in *The Witches of Eastwick*, Updike echoes Hawthorne’s belief in a world of spirit.¹¹⁸ In his essay “Hawthorne’s Creed,” Updike writes:

He believed, with his Puritan ancestors, that man’s spirit matters; that the soul can be distorted, stained, and lost; that the impalpable exerts force against the material. Our dreams move us: this is a psychological rather than a religious truth, but in a land where, as Emerson said, “things are in the saddle,” it gives the artist his vote.¹¹⁹

However, where Hawthorne treated Hester’s story as tragedy, Updike treats the story of Sarah Worth, Hester’s descendant, satirically. Hester had the courage of her convictions; Sarah makes herself up as she goes along.

“The story concerns Sarah Worth, a latter-day Hester Prynne who has become enamored by a Hindu religious leader called Arhat.”¹²⁰ *S.* is an epistolary novel — letters are interspersed with tapes from Sarah’s Seiko minicassette tape recorder — from the point of view of Sarah, forty-two years old in 1986, who left her Swampscott, Massachusetts, home and Charles, her husband of nearly twenty-two years — “twenty-two years’ worth of distractions and genteel pretense” — for an Arizona ashram.¹²¹ The ashram recalls Hawthorne’s Brook Farm, only slightly disguised in the *The Blithedale Romance*, another idealistic retreat-commune that did not free its residents from work, ego, or competition.

Sarah writes and talks in a style of run-ons and free associations, sudden lurches of thought, a style that shows her as much a Molly Bloom as another Hester Prynne. As the novel goes on, Sarah becomes increasingly open, witty, denunciatory, high-handed, as,

perhaps, only a New England woman of old family can be. She loves to give advice, warning her mother against selling her stock, warning her husband against allowing the lawn boys to scalp their lawn or blow dead leaves under the bushes.

"I must be tired all my commas are dropping away," she writes to her daughter, Pearl, a student in England, who will marry a wealthy Dutchman.¹²² Sarah is a ditzy Hester, swept away, for example, by the cute way the Arhat says "love."¹²³

Yet the novel is driven by her resentments and regrets for lost worlds of promise, from landscape to relations: the failed American dream. As she says, plaintively, on a tape to an old friend, "the ocean must be full of sails by now on the weekends, and the tulips are everywhere. I've missed the daffodils, the apple blossoms, and the hawthornes."¹²⁴ Sarah is on a quest. "Our guru says that we travel most when standing still."¹²⁵ She bears the burdens and expectations of her culture, as did Hester, who came back to Boston to tell troubled women that their community would be redeemed by a woman. Updike returns to the chastening, inspiring example of Hawthorne's novel, to Hester's passionate involvement and spiritual journey at the fag-end of the Puritan tradition. He propels a latter-day quest, another errand into the wilderness. As Sarah wrote to Myron, her college lover,

Puritanism in my parents had dwindled to a sort of housekeeping whose most characteristic gesture was to take something to the attic because it was undistinguished or vaguely reminiscent of some relative we preferred to forget.¹²⁶

We see that Sarah has led a disappointed life, a life of quiet though comfortable desperation, which has led her to rashly choose the ashram, run by a bogus guru. Sarah did not do what Hester did: give herself to the man she loved, hold to her subversive beliefs, and damn the consequences. Sarah bent to the expectations of her family. In the most moving moment in Sarah's correspondence, she tells Myron, "I loved you then and would love you now and am truly sorry I didn't have the courage to defy my family and all that inherited silver and go off with you and be your woman forever."¹²⁷

Updike's Sarah Worth is, in every way, a diminished version of the dignified and courageous Hester Prynne.¹²⁸ It is difficult to take either Sarah or her quest seriously. The novel is full of jokey allusions: Sarah writes to a Mrs. Blithedale, who is trying to get her money out of the ashram. Sarah and Charles bought their house from a Mrs. Pyncheon. All of this increase the fun of *S.* but diminishes the novel to the level of entertainment, just as Sarah's ashram stay might be seen as another experience in the consumer culture.

However, all this may be just Updike's point: that a serious spiritual life is even more elusive in contemporary America than it was in Hawthorne's or Hester's day. At the end of her journey, suburban home and ashram far behind her, Sarah arrives on the Caribbean isle Samana Cay, where, she writes to Myron, some believe Columbus really landed. Like Hester at the end of her days, Sarah lives alone, in a house by the ocean, contemplating the promises of American life. Hester saw liberated women redeeming the American dream, but Sarah — a willfully liberated woman, perhaps even Updike's parodic example of women's liberation — has more calculating and mundane dreams. Perhaps, she writes, she will go to Holland to help Pearl bear her grandchild. She decides to will her silver, carefully hidden from both her husband and her acquisitive guru, to Harvard's Houghton Library! She wishes she had, in her cottage by the sea, the wing chair in which she once sat monogramming place mats given to them by one of Charles's aunts at their wedding. "I think I did only three plus of one more *W* over the course of twenty-two years."¹²⁹ Sarah Worth could not sew like Hester, who converted her badge of shame into a work of art that

daunted the world. Updike here implies, with humility, that his fictional design, too, is a lesser thing. But, then, certainty and purpose, in life and art, is more difficult to discover in our time.

In *Libra* Don DeLillo creates a shocking fictional vision out of events surrounding the “humming bullet” that stopped John F. Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963. Through an invented alter ego, Nicholas Branch, retired senior analyst for CIA, investigator of the Kennedy assassination for fifteen years, DeLillo broods on the implication of that act. “We will follow the bullet trajectories backwards to the lives that occupy the shadows, actual men who moan in their dreams.”¹³⁰ *Libra* leads us into the subterranean world of American conspiracies, where obsessed men dream and scheme to change the world through sudden acts of violence, acts intended to validate their desperate lives. I offer my copy, with marginalia, to the Camp David library, for the next president’s sleepless nights.

Libra mixes fact and fiction, actual and imaginary characters, speculations and fabrications, to capture some amazing events in our time. In 1960, long before the Kennedy assassination initiated many Americans into conspiracy theories of history, Philip Roth wrote, “the American writer in the middle of the twentieth century has his hands full in trying to understand, describe, and then make *credible* much of American reality. It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one’s meager imagination.”¹³¹

One of the ways American novelists have chosen to make American reality plausible is to blur the conventional distinction between fact and fiction, as William Styron did with a slave rebellion in *The Confessions of Nat Turner* or Robert Coover did with Richard Nixon’s early career in *The Public Burning*, works that blend history and biography into original fictional designs.¹³² When extraordinary public events and implausible public figures are shaped to the requirements of fiction they become coherent, imaginable.

Don DeLillo’s *Libra*, as he explains in an “author’s note,” provides “a way of thinking about the assassination without being constrained by half-facts or overwhelmed by possibilities, by the tide of speculation that widens with the years.”¹³³ Rather than exploit the Kennedy assassination for its lurid or theatric possibilities, DeLillo’s novel exposes the plots, subplots, and counterplots surrounding that event so that Americans might come to terms with their worst national fears. Where the Warren Commission Report muffled inquiry and fostered paranoia, *Libra* illuminates through creative speculation; its effect is salvific.

On the novel’s opening page we discover Lee Harvey Oswald, in the early 1950s, riding the subway from the Bronx to Manhattan, linked to fields of force and power, validated by his connection to a thrust and energy that compensate for his own vacuity. He thrills at the secret world of tunnels beneath the city, “this secret power, rising to a shriek, this secret force of the soul in the tunnels under New York.”¹³⁴ He rushes to meet his fate.

Other men will see that Oswald keeps his appointment in Samarra. Former CIA officials and paramilitaries who had been involved in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion wonder what they can do to renew hostilities between Washington and Cuba. One of them decides that the anti-Castro forces will revive if an attempt is made on JFK’s life, an attempt that can be traced to the Cubans. The plan has the logic of “a dream whose meaning slowly becomes apparent.”¹³⁵ The plotters not only have to plan the shooting, they also must leave clues and create suspects that will lead investigators back to Castro. Oswald — with his

erratic military career, his stay in Russia, his defense of Cuba, and his attempt on the life of General Edwin Walker — becomes their dupe: if Oswald had not existed, they would have had to invent him. Walter (Win) Everett, Jr., principal plotter, a figment of DeLillo's imagination, is enthralled by the art of his plausible fiction. "His gunmen would appear behind a strip of scenic gauze. You have to leave them with coincidence, lingering mystery. This is what makes it real."¹³⁶

The plotters' original plan was to have "a spectacular miss," but plots have a life of their own, so they devise a new plan that will have even greater impact.¹³⁷ "Plots carry their own logic. There is a tendency of plots to move toward death."¹³⁸ The rest, as they say, is history.

DeLillo makes history plausible, a nightmare from which we can awake, by creating authentic characters, whether they derive from the realms of fact or imagination. Mobster Carmine Latta, for example, is furious at Robert Kennedy for ordering Justice Department harassment. Latta combines vengeance with nostalgia for the loss of mob activities in Havana, which he expresses in plausible street lingo.

I like to see a room where the dealers wear a tux. Plus there's action all over town.
Your cockfights, your jai alai. At the track you play roulette between races. I mean tell me where it went.

Latta then turns suddenly ominous, speaking of JFK, "You cut off the head, the tail doesn't wag."¹³⁹ In a few sentences DeLillo rounds a character, who is convincing if not necessarily true, into the design of his plot.

All of DeLillo's characters brood on secrets, hidden links, plots, conspiracies, and all are correct. His novel's plot — the inner working of a larger myth of public sacrifice, JFK's assassination, the details of which many of us know better than our own lives — centers on assorted plotters. There is a metafictional dimension to *Libra*, for the major characters are self-reflexive, watching themselves act, imagining how their lives will be retold. Each is involved in creating a useful fiction, a persona. Each seeks to enlarge the significance of his life by linking himself to forces of history, as though it were a third rail that would send current, energy, power, light, death, and transfiguration through his body. DeLillo presents a novel and a world about "men in small rooms," men who imagine plots into being and other men who try to figure out hidden correspondences, after the fact.¹⁴⁰ We all plot useful and destructive fictions from the events of our lives. The imaginatively stunted men involved in Kennedy's assassination took the metaphor of plot literally.

In *Libra* we confront a world beyond reason. Clay Shaw, an actual playboy on the edge of the conspiracy, asks Oswald, as DeLillo imagines, the date of his birthday.

"October eighteen," Lee said.

"Libra. A Libran."

"The Scales," [David] Ferrie said.

"The Balance," Shaw said.

It seemed to tell them everything they had to know.¹⁴¹

Here rationality dissolves into dreams, discourse into paralanguage. We have entered a realm where everything corresponds but nothing means: where patterns without significance prevail; where we cannot tell the dancer from the dance. We are all — characters, historical investigators, novelist, and readers — enclosed within a mystery, as was the plaintive Marina Oswald, who was stunned at seeing herself, Lee, and their daughter,

June, on television, in a Fort Worth department store showroom window. "She kept walking out of the picture and coming back. She was amazed every time she saw herself return."¹⁴²

For Henry James, fiction provided "an image in the mirror."¹⁴³ Don DeLillo's fictional image is a collage of shards and fragments, mirrors pocked by bullets, in which we can see our refracted selves and our dislocated times. Yet DeLillo's art also provides an antidote, for it makes events coherent, if not plausible. In *Libra* we discover a daunting yet clarifying parable of the American experience.

In his acceptance speech before the Democratic National Convention, Michael Dukakis spoke of "an idea as powerful as any in human history, . . . the idea of community." He cited John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts, who said, "we must be knit together as one."¹⁴⁴ Of course, Michael Dukakis meant to offer a positive, hopeful vision of the American future. Nearly twenty-eight years before, John F. Kennedy had also drawn on Winthrop's "city upon a hill" sermon, in Kennedy's election eve address at Boston Garden: "the kind of society we build, the kind of power we generate, the kind of enthusiasm we incite, all this will tell us whether, in the long run, darkness or light overtakes the world."¹⁴⁵ In retrospect, Kennedy's imagery (the release of forces, power and enthusiasm; the struggle of light and dark) seems more ominous than it did at the time, when it was a text awaiting interpretation. DeLillo, it might be said, develops Kennedy's implications in his fiction. DeLillo and others show us in their works of imagination and introspection that we are joined — as Hawthorne's fiction shows America's early settlers to have been — by more constricting and killing ties that bind. Such books tell us who we are; they provide necessary images for those who wish to inspire a vision of what we might become. ♀

Notes

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3. Include an abstract, or a short summary of the article, approximately 150 words long, also double-spaced, at the beginning of the article. Use the label “Abstract.”
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Ex.: Shaun O’Connell is professor of English at the University of Massachusetts at Boston; he teaches and writes on contemporary Irish and American literature.
5. If the methodology requires an explanation, it should be given under the heading “Methodology” on separate pages, double-spaced.
6. Footnotes must appear in a group as endnotes on separate pages, under the heading “Notes,” and must be double-spaced. Mathematical formulations, where possible, should be included as endnotes. Endnotes should be set out in sequential order, as follows. Publication data for citation from a book must include full first name or initials plus last name of author or editor, compiler, etc.; full title of work; editor’s name if given in addition to author; city of publication; name of publisher; year of publication; and pertinent page number(s). Publication data for citation from a journal article must include full first name or initials plus last name of author; full title of article; full name of journal; specification of journal issue (volume number, issue number, date); and pertinent page number(s).

Examples of endnotes for citation from a book:

Robert Frost, “The Gift Outright,” in *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 348.

Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960), 24.

Example of endnote for citation from a journal article:

Shaun O’Connell, “The Infrequent Family: In Search of Boston’s Literary Community,” *Boston Magazine* 67, no. 1 (January 1975): 44-47.

7. For a reference list (entitled “Bibliography”), the name of the author or editor is inverted (if there is more than one name, invert only the first), and the page numbers are left out.
8. Instead of op. cit., the journal uses shortened references. For books, include last name of author, short title (containing key word(s) from main title), and page number of reference. For articles in periodicals, include last name of author, short title of article, and page number. For unpublished material, omit the depository, unless more than one collection with the same name has been cited.
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